

metro kansas city

EDITION



The Collingsworth Family

Concerts & Events | PAGE 14

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VOICE

CHRISTIAN

EDUCATION

EXPO

March 5, plus, a

Northland K-12

Open House March 7!

See BACK PAGE

Education Expo

& Open House

March 5 & 7

The 2016 Christian Education and College Expo is Saturday, March 5 but, this year, a second K-12 Open House has been added for the Northland. The Open House will take place Monday, Mar. 7 at the Gladstone Community Center in Gladstone, MO. More info is available at metrovoicenews.com.

The March 5 Expo runs from 9:30 a.m to 2 p.m. and will once again feature area K-12 schools, homeschooling organizations from Missouri and Kansas and 50 colleges from 15 states. In addition, free seminars will be offered on everything from how to take the ACT to finding the most college financial aid to an intro to homeschooling.

The Northland Open House was added at the suggestion of several Northland schools. It will serve as a opportunity for parents in the Northland to visit with schools and get information about K-12 options.

Both events are sponsored by the Metro Voice Newspaper.

“It’s the 18th year for the Expo and it continues to grow,” says Anita Widaman, co-publisher of Metro Voice. “We are excited to have partnered with area schools and colleges to bring options for all levels of education together for one big event.”

For info visit metrovoicenews.com or call 816-524-4522. Look for “Midwest Christian Education & College Expo” on Facebook.



24 TO CHRIST

A man wrongfully accused of murder becomes local pastor after spending nearly a quarter of a century in prison

by Sam Smith

A Kansas City-area church has hired a man who was found guilty of murder and then exonerated after 24 years behind bars to be its newest associate pastor after he completed seminary in December.

Although Darryl Burton grew up in the Baptist faith, he stopped going to church during his teen years, became increasingly disillusioned with religion and grew to be a skeptic of God. As Burton distanced himself from the church, his grandmother warned him that "one of these days, boy, you are going to need Jesus. I hope you remember to call on Him."

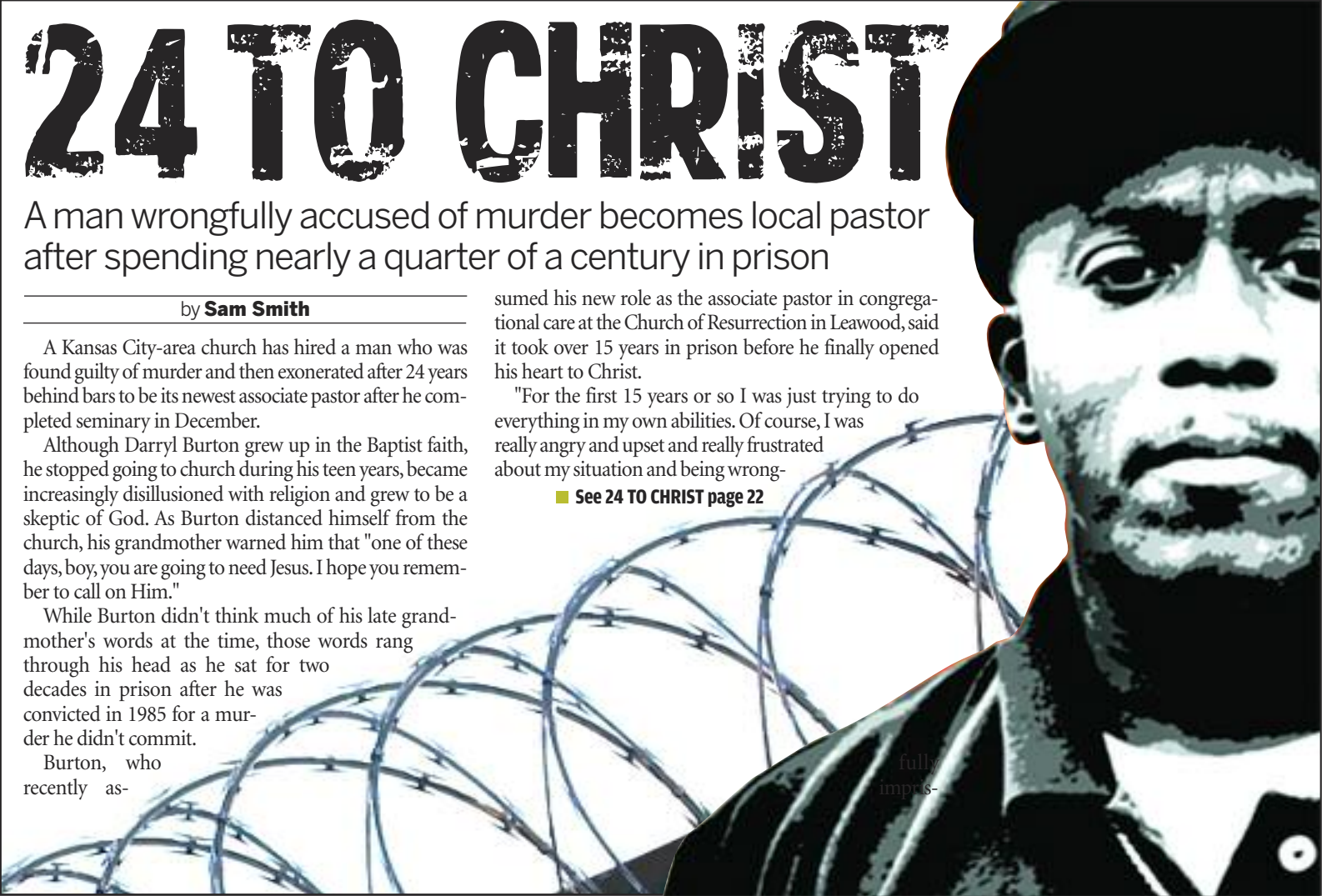
While Burton didn't think much of his late grandmother's words at the time, those words rang through his head as he sat for two decades in prison after he was convicted in 1985 for a murder he didn't commit.

Burton, who recently as-

sumed his new role as the associate pastor in congregational care at the Church of Resurrection in Leawood, said it took over 15 years in prison before he finally opened his heart to Christ.

"For the first 15 years or so I was just trying to do everything in my own abilities. Of course, I was really angry and upset and really frustrated about my situation and being wrong-

See 24 TO CHRIST page 22





We're not in Kansas any more

Word from God led Kansas couple to Africa

by Steve Reese | Assist News

Swaziland, a small, landlocked monarchy in southern Africa, is a long way from Buhler, Kan. However, Tracy and Becky Spencer plan to build their second home in that nation – this one for orphans of HIV/AIDS. They feel like Dorothy in “The Wizard of Oz”, saying, “We’re not in Kansas any more.”

The Spencers’ vision for building Christ-centered orphanages in Swaziland, where 50 percent of men and 32 percent of women are infected with the deadly virus, looks and sounds like the fulfillment of a prophecy given to them by an Oklahoma pastor more than three decades ago during a home Bible study.

John Hollar looked directly at them in 1984 and said, “You will be a father to many more than your eyes can see.” Today Hollar, is director of Christ for the Nations in Dallas.

In 1984, the Spencers had four children, and one was on the way. The family eventually grew to eight — four adopted and four biological children — but it hardly numers “as far as the eye can see.” However, in 2006, when the Spencers traveled to Swaziland on a mission trip, they pondered Hollar’s words. There, in Swaziland, the Spencers saw untold numbers of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and wondered if they were Tracy’s prophesied

See SPENCER page 23

Voting—got 5 minutes?



If you have not noticed, there's an election this year. A responsibility of citizenship is to make sure that we, our friends and family members are registered to vote.

For both Missourians and Kansans, the solution could be as easy as stopping by their local library.

"Depending on how busy we are, registering to vote probably takes five minutes," said Sherry, a librarian at Mid Continent Public Library in Lee's Summit.

To register in Missouri you need a personal ID such as driver's license or state identification card issued by another state; ID issued by the Federal Government, the state, or a local election authority; ID issued by a Missouri institution (public or private) of higher education, including a university, college, vocational and technical school; or

■ See VOTER REGISTRATION page 22

MISSOURI CHURCH CASE POISED TO MAKE HISTORY

A case the U.S. Supreme Court just agreed to hear is about ground-up tires for a church playground, but it could be one of the more significant religious-exercise cases in a decade. The court will consider when states can provide aid to religious institutions.

Missouri nonprofits can apply to the state for scrap tires to use for rubber playground surfaces. Trinity Lutheran Church in Columbia, Mo., which has a daycare called the Learning Center, applied to receive the ground-up tires for its playground.

The state ranked the church's application highly but refused the grant based on a state constitutional provision that forbids state money going to "support" churches. About 35 states have similar provisions.

The church challenged the application of the state constitutional provision in federal court. Trinity lost at the district court and the 8th U.S. Circuit.

The Supreme Court, to some surprise, took the case, and will hear arguments this spring. The court's decision to take the case could possibly indicate the justices' desire to reverse the 8th Circuit.

The significance of such a seemingly pedestrian case lies in a Supreme Court precedent from a 2004 case named *Locke v. Davey*. In that case, the court ruled under Chief Justice William Rehnquist that Washington state was justified



Workers spread rubber mulch on a Missouri playground.

in refusing a scholarship to a student studying theology at a private Christian school. Students in other nonreligious degrees were still eligible for aid.

Essentially, the court ruled that a state was justified in refusing to grant scholarships to train clergy. Now the Court will decide if that applies to other aid.

"The Trinity Lutheran Church case is important because it's going to resolve whether Locke should be read narrowly or broadly," said Carl Esbeck, a religious freedom lawyer at the University of Missouri School of Law, just down the road from the church.

Esbeck filed an amicus brief on the side of the church in the lower court. "If you care about religious liberty, you want Locke to be read narrowly."

When a three-judge panel of the 8th Circuit ruled against the church, one judge, Raymond Gruender, dissented in part.

He wrote that "Locke did not leave states with unfettered discretion to exclude the religious from generally available public benefits." He also believed that "the disfavor of religion here is more pronounced than in Locke."

"Schoolchildren playing on a safer rubber surface made from environmentally-friendly recycled tires has nothing to do with religion," Gruender wrote in his dissent.

The facts in this case are good for the church because it is clear that scrap tire does not somehow promote the Christian gospel, and the playground is a resource for neighborhood children.

"They haven't had a case like this since *Locke v. Davey* ... so we haven't seen anything like this for 12 years," Esbeck said. "If they rule here in favor of the church, it's probably going to stand for another 12 years at least."

David Barton to speak at Topeka summit

Race relations, economics & prayer is focus

David Barton, founder of WallBuilders, will speak in Topeka on Friday, February 12, at the National Black Robe Regiment Summit. In addition, there will be presentations from Rev. Mark Gonzales, Executive Director of the pastors' group National Black Robe Regiment; Donna Lippoldt, founder of Culture Shield; and Congressman Bob McEwen.

The Black Robed Regiment was the name that the British placed on courageous American clergy during the Founding Era (a backhanded reference to the black robes they wore). The British blamed the Black Regiment for American Independence.

"We are living in a day and age in which we cannot afford to sit back and simply ignore what is going on politically," says Donna Lippoldt, founder of Culture Shield.

"The very existence of our nation depends on Christians engaging in the process. If not, we can expect a continual undermining of our values."

"We cannot allow 1-2% of our culture to destroy our religious freedom, dictate our children's curriculum, and discourage us to the point that we give up," said Lippoldt. "If you have wondered what you can do to make a difference, this Summit is for you. For the sake of our children we must pursue truth and integrity. We cannot accept Biblical illiteracy. We must learn our true American history."

The summit will empower pastors and leaders for social and cultural transformation, and to be equipped to make a difference in 2016. They will learn how to influence people, frame a discussion to open eyes to truth on race relations, economics, and prayer.

■ See BARTON page 6



BARTON



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IRS proposal may effect giving

The IRS has proposed an amendment to its regulations under which churches and charities would furnish to the IRS the Social Security numbers or Employer Identification numbers of donors who give more than \$250.



HINKLE

The proposal has drawn sharp criticism from faith leaders, because it could have a chilling effect on charitable giving, including church offerings. The proposed rule, while voluntary at the moment, dramatically increases the risk of identity theft for millions of individuals who give.

"The proposed rule will raise concern about identity theft in the minds of givers and it would significantly complicate giving for individuals," said Don Hinkle, director of public policy for the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC). "It will force individuals to

consider disclosing personal information as part of their decision about whether and how much to give."

The proposal comes right at a time when other government agencies and civil liberties groups are urging people not to give out their Social Security numbers because of identity theft.

"The good news is that churches and conventions are exempt from the requirement to file Form 990," said Michael Whitehead, MBC general legal counsel.

Under this proposed regulation, ministries may file a supplemental report which lists names, addresses and Social Security numbers of donors, and the amount of the gift.

"Since the Social Security number is such a hot target for identity thieves, rules should be avoided that proliferate the exchange of the Social Security number even more widely," said Whitehead.

The IRS hasn't set a start date.

Winterfest will host Les Norman and Robert Rogers

Coldwater of Lee's Summit will host its annual Winterfest fundraiser on February 27 from 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn. This year's theme is "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Proceeds benefit Coldwater programs, including the Friends Day Food Pantry and Clothes Closet every second and fourth Saturday of the month with a Hot Meal program; Senior Mobile Pantry for homebound seniors; No Hungry Kids! weekend backpacks of food, including Harvesters' Back-Snack program for elementary children; food support for the Lee's Summit middle and high schools; and No Hungry Kids!



ROGERS

Speakers include Les Norman, former major league baseball player and TV analyst for the Royals, and Robert Rogers, inspirational speaker, and author of "Into the Deep: one man's story of how tragedy took his family but could not take his faith" and "Rise Above."

In 2003, Rogers lost his wife and four children in a flash flood in Kansas while returning to their home in Liberty. In 2004, Rogers left his technical career and started Mighty in the Land Ministry and

the following year traveled with Metro Voice publisher Dwight Widaman to India on a tsunami relief mission.

The night includes dinner catered by Hereford

House, a silent auction and a Piccadilly auction. The cost is \$50 per person through Feb. 14 and \$60 until the event. To register visit www.coldwater.me. For more information, call 816-786-0758.

newsbriefs

Voter ID measure passes Missouri house

The Missouri House has sent the Senate proposals to require Missourians to have photo IDs to vote. One proposal in the House would ask voters to change the state constitution so it would allow voter photo ID, and the other would create the structure in law for it.

A voter photo ID requirement was struck down by the state Supreme Court in 2006 because it required people to pay to get an ID, and any documents they would need to get one, such as a birth certificate.

The sponsor of the statutory language, Representative Justin Alfer-

man (R-Hermann), says his bill addresses that concern.

He says under his bill, "If you do not have a license issued by the State of Missouri ... the state of Missouri shall pay for one for you. If you do not have the source documentation to obtain a driver's or a non-driver's license, either that being from the State of Missouri or any other state, the State of Missouri will pay for the source documents."



Reps Tony Dugger (left), Justin Alferman sponsor bills to allow voter IDs.

Winter

WOMEN'S

WEEKEND

FEB. 26/27

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OVERCOME YOUR OBSTACLES; BRING OUT THE BEST LEADER IN YOU

2016 holds an invitation for you to become the leader you want to be



LINDA FIELDS

Founder and CEO of 7M-pact

viewpoint

Picture for a moment that you are flourishing in your work and your personal life. Can you see yourself accomplishing your plans and dreams?

Why is it a struggle? What gets in the way?

Businesspeople, stay-at home moms, teachers and preachers alike tell me these things keep them from living the life they want to live:

1. Getting Things Done – People are overwhelmed by their workload, their circumstances and the stress of daily life.

They don't have the energy and focus to do the important things that would help them become the leader they want to be.

2. Sense of Calling? – People are anxious to know if they are fulfilling

their calling. Can it be a holy calling to work at a day job doing customer service, selling products, running a business, or teaching a class of rebellious kids?

People ask, "Am I doing work that matters to God?"

3. No One Understands -- Many feel they are alone in their quest to live a life of accomplishment as a Christian. They don't belong to a community of like-minded people who are on the same journey.

Be encouraged if you face any of these obstacles because now you can know exactly what you need to do to bring out the best leader within you. And it is possible.

To make progress as a leader you



want to learn from others who are experiencing success, who are living the type of life you would like to live. Learn from their mistakes and catch their lessons. Walking out your plan in like-minded community unlocks your potential for the next level as a leader.

The exciting benefit to those you serve, whatever your occupation may be, is that you are now becoming a leader who will impact more people in greater ways than before. Your leadership is bigger than you; it is for those you influence day by day.

You owe it to God, to yourself and to those you work with to become the best leader in you in 2016. Get started with a checklist to help you start your

day off right.

Download your Seize the Day morning tool at: yeslinda.org/morning.

Linda Fields is Founder and CEO of 7M-pact. Linda helps men and women in all walks of life to bring godly impact in their spheres of influence through her events, coaching, and resources. Linda specialized in communication postgraduate studies at the University of Texas, and earned her bachelor of science in business education and MBA from Texas State University. Linda and her husband, Rick, live in the Kansas City area and enjoy spending time with family, friends, and associates, "our most precious sphere of influence."

What are you waiting for?



DR. DAN ERICKSON

Chief Servant
Leader of the
People Matter
Ministries

myopinion

If you had unlimited resources and complete freedom to fail, what would you attempt with your life? Would you live the life you are now living? What would you change? What would your life become and what would you do with it? I have coached hundreds of individuals and couples and I have come to the conclusion that the average adult is not making a life at all; they are simply making a living. They do not know where they are going; let alone how they are going to get there.

What is the life you want to live? How would you live it and what is keeping you from attaining it?

Those are the million-dollar questions. I wish I had a dollar for every time I have met with people, asked them these questions and watched as a glaze came over their eyes. It's as if I asked them the impossible. They seem to think there is no way that God would help them to achieve their dreams, so they don't even try.

Many believe that they are not good enough, holy enough or close enough to God to experience his magnificent plan for their lives. But I wonder how good Peter was when he walked on water. How holy were the first disciples when they were commissioned to change history? They were ordinary just like us (if you don't believe me, read the New Testament), but they chose to give their lives to something extraordi-

See PLAN page 6

SIX SIMPLE SECRETS TO SUCCESS IN MINISTRY

Every time we have international guests visit us in Manila, someone will eventually ask me about the "secret" or the "keys" or the "secret keys" to our success and growth. Here's my current answer.

1. CALLING. Figure out what God wants you to do with your life. Not what your friends, parents and culture want you to do. God has a unique calling for you. Some people figure that out. Some don't. Success starts when we find out what God wants us to do.

2. COMMITMENT. Work hard. Go all in. No holds barred. Be obsessed. Burn the candle at both ends, and the middle. My Dad taught me hard work, and the Bible confirmed it. Some people can't spell work ethic. They are lazy and



STEVE MURRELL

President of Every
Nation Churches &
Ministries,

myopinion

they will never succeed until they embrace hard work.

And for those who are working hard with little to show for it: after you have worked hard for several years, keep working and continue believing. Refuse

to quit. Don't quit when it gets tough. Don't quit when it gets costly. Don't quit when everyone tells you it is not worth it.

Those who quit do not succeed. Those who refuse to quit eventually succeed. In summary: work hard and keep working hard for a long time.

3. COMMUNITY. Your calling is bigger than you. What God wants you to do cannot be done alone. You will need a team to be successful. (I am forever grateful that God lets me work with the best team on the planet!)

4. CONCENTRATION. Stay focused on what God called and gifted you to do.

Do not diversify. Do not multitask. Do not attempt to do everything that

can be done in the name of God. You cannot meet every need. Find the needs God wants you to meet, and concentrate on doing that the best you possibly can. We have been successful because we stuck with the "same ole boring strokes" for three decades. We have never jumped on the "get-big-quick" flavor of the month. We know what we are called to do (see #5 and #6 below), and we simply concentrate on that and nothing else.

5. HONOR GOD. This is the ultimate motive for all we do, and the ultimate measure of real success.

6. MAKE DISCIPLES. Period.

Summary: Find out what God wants you to do, and keep doing that and nothing else, for a long long, long time.

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Dr. Michael Brown

Founder, Fire School
of Ministry

Michael L. Brown is the founder and president of FIRE School of Ministry in Concord, North Carolina; Director of the Coalition of Conscience; and host of the daily syndicated talk radio show, the Line of Fire. Dr. Brown holds a Ph.D. in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures from New York University, and has preached throughout America and around the world, bringing a message of repentance, revival, reformation, and cultural revolution.

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ALREADY FAILED AT YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS? RETHINK YOUR GOALS

The practice of making New Year's resolutions goes back over 3,000 years to the ancient Babylonians. There is just something about the start of a new year that gives us the feeling of a fresh start and a new beginning. In reality, there is no difference between December 31 and January 1. Nothing mystical occurs at midnight on December 31. The Bible does not speak for or against the concept of New Year's resolutions. However, if a Christian determines to make a New Year's resolution, what kind of resolution should he or she make? And, how are you coming along with yours as we rush towards March?

Common New Year's resolutions are commitments to quit smoking, to stop drinking, to manage money more wisely and to spend more time with family. By far, the most common New Year's resolution is to lose weight, in conjunction with exercising more and eating more healthily. These are all good goals to set. However, 1 Timothy 4:8 instructs us to keep exercise in perspective: "For physical training is of some



value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." The vast majority of New Year's resolutions, even among Christians, are in relation to physical things. This should not be.

Many Christians make New Year's resolutions to pray more, to read the

Bible every day, and to attend church more regularly. These are fantastic goals. However, these New Year's resolutions fail just as often as the non-spiritual resolutions, because there is no power in a New Year's resolution. Resolving to start or stop doing a certain activity has no value unless you have the proper motivation for stopping or starting that activity. For example, why do you want to read the Bible every day? Is it to honor God and grow spiritually, or is it because you have just heard that it is a good thing to do? Why do you want to lose weight? Is it to honor God with your body, or is it for vanity, to honor yourself?

Philippians 4:13 tells us, "I can do

everything through Him who gives me strength." John 15:5 declares, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." If God is the center of your New Year's resolution, it has chance for success, depending on your commitment to it. If it is God's will for something to be fulfilled, He will enable you to fulfill it. If a resolution is not God honoring and/or is not in agreement in God's Word, we will not receive God's help in fulfilling the resolution.

So, your New Year's resolutions don't fit this strategy? Try these. It's never too late.

- (1) pray to the Lord for wisdom (James 1:5) in regards to what resolutions, if any, He would have you make
- (2) pray for wisdom as to how to fulfill the goals God gives you
- (3) rely on God's strength to help you
- (4) find an accountability partner who will help you and encourage you
- (5) don't become discouraged with occasional failures; instead, allow them to motivate you further
- (6) don't become proud or vain, but give God the glory. Psalm 37:5-6 says, "Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noon-day sun."

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Winterfest 2016

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Plated dinner catered by Hereford House
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To learn more about Coldwater and register for Winterfest 2016 visit www.coldwater.me.

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Les Norman
Former major league baseball player, radio host, author and TV analyst for the KC Royals

Robert Rogers
Inspirational speaker, pianist and author of "Into the Deep" and "Rise Above"

PLAN

continued from page 4

nary.

So how do we start this journey to reach our potential and destiny?

Scripture tells a story about a wealthy young man who came to Jesus and asked what he must do to have eternal life. Christ responded that he must keep all the commandments. The young man responded that he had done this. He then asked Jesus what else he needed to do. Jesus responded, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in Heaven; come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21). As we read on, we learn that the man sorrowfully walked away from Jesus, because he could not bear to give up his wealth.

If we are going to discover our God-given potential and destiny, we must first leave every competing loyalty. We must be rid of anything or any relationship that comes between us and God's plan and purpose for our lives. When I reveal this crucial first step, most people simply walk away with their heads bowed and I never hear from them.

My only conclusion is that the cost is too great. Yet reality is that we cannot experience God's best for our lives without the willingness to set aside the things that are odds with his values. As Jesus informs us in the gospel of Mark: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:34-35).

What are you waiting for? Lose your life for Christ's sake and you will find life to the fullest – abundantly more than we can ask or think. Then imagine the possibilities!

—Dr. Dan Erickson is the chief servant leader of People Matter Ministries. He is the author of "Finding Your Greater Yes!" and "God Loves Do-Overs."
derickson@peoplesmatterministries.com.



BARTON

continued from page 2

Civic Action Team Training will be offered after a complimentary lunch. Mark Gonzales will teach about the nuts and bolts of organizing Civic Impact Teams in churches, with the hope that more pastors and leaders will be motivated to run for office.

"Jesus, while on this earth was very focused," said Lipholdt. "He requires no less from us. We cannot afford leisure. Please, gather your friends, and rather than talking about the culture, let's IMPACT it!"

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. The Summit will be 10:00 am to 2:00 pm, and Civic Action Team Training is from 2:30 to 5:30 pm at Capitol Plaza and Convention Center, 1717 SW Topeka Blvd. The event is free but registration is required. Call (210) 802-1397 or at www.nationalblackroberegiment.com.



Retreat planning: How to create a retreat plan for your church

BY JESS SCHLOAD

Planning a retreat? Here is your chance to be a hero! The more you plan in advance, the more organized you will be, and the overall outcome will be higher quality.

Most companies, churches and organizations will not simply hand over money for you to host a retreat – even if they asked you to plan it. Your company will want to know rough budget estimates and details about your event. Even if you are in charge of your own budget, it is still helpful to take the step of preparing a basic plan to organize and save your thoughts. So let's get started!

How to prepare a basic plan

Your plan should include at least four things: a summary, a goal, the audience, and the budget.

1. Summarize the event

Your summary is a basic snapshot of your retreat in three sentences or less. With no additional information, anyone that reads your plan should be able to understand what the event is from a high-level perspective. It is appropriate to include a basic goal in this summary. For example:

- This leadership retreat will bring together the leaders of (fill in the blank) company/church/university for program and budget planning for the next year.

2. Determine a timeline

When is this retreat? Are you planning it in the winter or in the spring? Include the target timeframe of the event, the promotion period, and any other important milestones. Make sure you understand the timing of your participants. How much lead time do they need? Tip: start from the end (the retreat date) and work backwards. For example:

- Retreat planning: Jan.-May
- Website page created: March 1
- Promotion: March-June
- Retreat Date: mid-June

3. Set a goal (or two or three)

All retreats should have at least one simple goal. Are you planning a retreat on behalf of a business, university, or other organization? If so, consider the mission of the organization and create a goal that aligns with this mission. Goals can be high-level, or they can be very specific. Set enough goals that someone reading your plan can start to picture your retreat. For example:

- 3 days
- 20+ participants
- Overnight accommodations at

- a camp retreat center
- Team-building activities
- Completed program plans and budget for next year
- Enhance leadership skills
- Promote togetherness and a sense of community

4. Define your audience

First, ask yourself these questions: Who are you inviting to your retreat? Are they males and females? Adults only, or are children invited? Next, dig a little deeper into your audience. What do your attendees care about? What are they interested in? This does not dictate who is allowed to come. Rather, it outlines the group for which the retreat is intended. Doing this small brainstorm and jotting down a few notes will help you later as you plan activities and promote the event. For example:

- Males and females
- 35-55 years old
- Doctors, CEOs, administrative professionals, team leaders
- Many have children
- Volunteers



- Live in _____ city/state/neighborhood

5. Propose a budget

Money is a big factor for most retreats. Research and compile estimates for the larger cost categories. The costs should be realistic – not too high, and

not too low. If they are too high, you might not get approved. Too low? You might be stuck with a penny-saver budget. Your venue will be one of your larger expenses. A four-star retreat center will require a much higher budget than a camp retreat center. Be sure to include an estimate for overnight accommodations and meeting space. Other

large budget items to consider include: travel and transportation; food and beverage; and marketing and promotion.

Also, be sure to subtract the estimated cost per person in your budget to show how costs will be offset. If the goal of the retreat is to raise money, include estimated earnings from fundraising activities, which could be a silent auction, offering, etc.

6. Your retreat plan should be able to fit on 1-2 pages

Now that you have finished creating your retreat plan, you have a nice guide to use moving forward. The items that you have already identified should help you get budget approval, provide direction on event promotion, help you choose a retreat theme, and overall, organize your thoughts. Having your plan ready also helps the retreat center - the staff can better support the goals of the retreat. Often they have ideas about ways to use the facility that you never would have known.

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SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PLANNING A CHURCH YOUTH RETREAT

1. Pray and define the purpose

Have you ever heard the saying, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably get there?" The first and most important step in planning a meaningful youth retreat is to set the vision by defining the purpose.

Questions to Answer:

- Are you hoping to build deeper relationships within the youth group?
- Is the goal to provide concentrated time away from busy schedules so youth can connect with God and grow?
- Would you like to create a "greenhouse environment" for spiritual growth that will spur future development?
- Are you hoping to create a fun experience so students will want to continue being involved in youth group once they return?
- Would you like to focus on an opportunity for those in your group to serve others in need?

2. Recruit assistance

The retreat will be as strong as the team that plans it. Use online sign-up sites to coordinate youth group parents and volunteers, so each person can use their gifts and skills to help in small ways that will pay big dividends.

Questions to Answer:

- Who are parents, volunteers, or church staff with strong administrative and organizational skills?
- Can you send out a sign-up to families who are interested in the retreat which outlines all of the possible ways to volunteer to help with the planning?
- Do you have a point person who will be willing to coordinate all of the volunteers, leaving you open to focus on the big vision for the retreat?

3. Select your location

Since you've already defined the purpose of the retreat, this step should be easier. Make sure to visit your top choices or talk to several people who've taken youth groups there before to see if your vision for the weekend can be met.

Questions to Answer:

- What type of accommodations will fulfill your mission best?
- What is your budget?
- Do you want to cook or have meals provided?
- How many people will attend?
- What types of meeting rooms and spaces do you need?
- What recreational activities do you hope to engage in?
- Have you been to the retreat center before, or do you have a lot of good recommendations from others?

4. Count the costs

Make sure that the cost of the retreat won't prohibit any of the youth from attending. If you lose interest from parents at the beginning with high fees, you won't get it back.

Questions to Answer:

- Have you taken a survey or learned from past years what a reasonable cost for the retreat would be so that participants in your group can afford to go?
- Will you need to do fundraising?
- If you need to do fundraising, how



can you prevent the fundraising process from becoming all consuming?

- Is the church or individual donors willing to offer scholarships for students who would like to attend but can't afford the cost?

5. Invite the youth

First impressions are critical. So put some pizzazz into your introduction of the retreat to the youth group. Then don't let up. Continue to be creative as you invite and release information about the trip to students.

Questions to Answer:

- Do you want to focus on deepening the faith of your core group or open the invitation to friends outside the church as an outreach?
- What skits, games, or videos could you use to launch the concept and details of the retreat in the months before you go?
- How will you build excitement for the retreat over time while releasing details in stages?

6. Make a packing list

This one needs to be a group effort. If you're a guy, it's going to be hard to envision what the teen girls in your group are going to "need" once they arrive and vice versa. Work with parents and volunteers who have gone on past retreats to compile a list of must haves.

Questions to Answer:

- Can you divide your list into must

bring and optional items?

- Do you have a limit on how many bags/items each student can bring?
- Is it possible that clothing will get ruined on the trip, or will they need specific types of outfits for different activities?

7. Give parents and students proper expectations

You'll save yourself a whole mess of headaches if you're proactive in this area. Recruit a detail oriented person to help compile information about the retreat and plan out how you'll release it at the right times, so parents and students have information right before they realize they need it.

Questions to Answer:

- How much sleep can parents expect their children to get while on the retreat?
- What will the meals and accommodations be like?
- What will be the schedule and the theme, and who will be the speaker for the weekend?

8. Follow up with everyone

This is one of the last steps to ensure a wildly successful trip. Even if you're tempted to believe everything will go well, make sure your volunteers are double and triple checking all of the details well in advance of go time.

Questions to Answer:

- In the weeks leading up to the retreat, are you checking in with all of your vol-

unteers to make sure their roles are being fulfilled?

- Have the details and dates of your

stay been confirmed with the retreat center multiple times before your group hits the road?

- Is the retreat speaker equipped with all of the information needed for the trip, and are all of his/her travel arrangements confirmed?

- Do the youth and parents have all of the details they need to be ready to go with the right expectations?

It's time to hit the road. You started the process by praying, and you've hopefully continued in that spirit throughout the planning. Trust that God is in control and cares more about His purposes for the retreat being accomplished than you do.

And, finally, have fun!

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Why retreats are so important to our faith!

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," (Matthew 11:28).

Rest is a theme that is easily found in the Bible. Not only is it something that scripture is saturated in, but it is something that we believe is absolutely necessary in life.

When life becomes heavy, it is often the case that the only medication to cure such stress comes when one retreats to find peace and quiet. Through this escape, time can be spent contemplating goals, planning the next steps to take in life, finding some quiet, or maybe even coming closer to Christ; but how can something as simple as getting away save a life? Is this rest really something that vital?

At Sky Ranch Cave Springs, we wholeheartedly believe that it is. It is often in those times when people encounter Christ, the only thing that can truly save a life; and we focus on that life change so heavily that our whole mission at our camp is centered on creating a space for that encounter to take place. It is in this encounter that people are truly transformed for the better, and that is



something that is both necessary and priceless.

So often we hear stories of people who were ready to throw in the towel before they came for a retreat here with us, and it is stories like these that remind us of the true power that getting away from the hustle and bustle of life can carry.

So whether you are looking to find peace and rest, you need some time to get away and refocus, or you need that life change, our team at Sky Ranch Cave Springs would love to partner with you and your group so that you can discover the rest and life-change that a retreat can provide.

—Tim Finch, Retreat Coordinator.

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Keep all your plans organized with a retreat checklist

Let's have a retreat! Sounds like a good idea.

Why?

A retreat is a chance for encounter with self, with God, with other people, with creation, with issues. A retreat is, literally, a "strategic withdrawal." When we retreat, it is not for the purpose of just getting away and staying away. Everything involved in getting away, and all that is done while away, involves coming back. We go to the mountains not to see mountains, but to see the valleys in new perspective.

On a retreat we hope to deepen our relationship with God, to look at our lives — deliberately focusing on issues and questions through reflection and meditation, and discussion and dialogue with others — in order to come back with a renewed sense of direction for living.

Jesus modeled this pattern of engagement and withdrawal, and it is instructive for contemporary disciples as well.

Retreats deepen the fellowship of a community through shared experiences and can helpfully focus the energy of a group, whether your purpose is to do planning, problem solving, or team-building, or to tackle a topic of interest or concern.

Who is the retreat for? Are you planning for:

- Members of the church only?
- Members of your church and their invited guests?



■ Members of several churches in your area?

■ Any interested persons in your community?

Remember, people attend what they help to plan, so if you're looking to reach a larger audience than just your established group, involve others ... invite them to assist in planning for the retreat as well. Don't just invite them once all the planning is done!

When can we go? Make sure to check school calendars for concerts, big games, tests, etc., that would affect the attendance of your particular audience. Look also at times when in-service days or other days off might allow for a possible new pattern — like a Thursday evening through Saturday, for instance, or a Sunday afternoon through Monday night. Some adult groups have found that creating an alternative of interest to some people while others are involved in a major cultural event (the Super Bowl, Mother's Day, prom, a big tourist event in your town), is a worthwhile and much appreciated ministry.

As you plan for your retreat, there are many things to keep in mind. You'll find helpful input from your conference camp/retreat ministry

leaders — don't hesitate to ask for ideas that work well or considerations that are especially helpful at the site you are using. Many people have asked us for a checklist to guide their planning. Here is a topical list, then a timeline, and finally some tips from experienced leaders — offered to assist you.

Planning checklist

- ___ Reasons for having a retreat
- ___ Goals for this retreat
- ___ Theme
- ___ Dates
- ___ Location
- ___ Leaders
- ___ Activities and program components
- ___ Contingency plans
- ___ Meals
- ___ Finances
- ___ Schedule
- ___ Transportation
- ___ Snacks
- ___ Policies
- ___ Publicity
- ___ Registration
- ___ Evaluation
- ___ Other:
- ___ Other:

A retreat is an intentional time apart to experience a new awareness of the presence of God. It is an opportunity to get some distance and see things in perspective. It requires a pace that is unhurried and conducive to rest and relaxation in order to come back with a renewed sense of living as disciples of Christ.

Steps to take 6-12 months ahead

- Determine the reason for this retreat.
- Appoint a coordinator and form a retreat-planning team.
- Pray for guidance, direction, and purpose.

■ See CHECKLIST page 11

Marriage retreats matter



BY BRIAN HUGHES,
SENIOR PASTOR

I recently shared four 'time quadrants' that I think about concerning my marriage: The Day, the Week, the Quarter, and the Year.

I won't rehash it all here, but I want to focus on one part of our routine for the Quarter. Every three to four months, my wife Susan and I go away for 2 nights by ourselves. I even have a line item in our personal budget called "BandQ Getaways". I want to be sure I'm investing well in my marriage, so when times get tight, this is NOT the area I cut from our expenses!

One of those Getaways every year is reserved for a guided marriage retreat. What I mean by that is some kind of event or conference where there is a speaker, teacher or guide who will give us new ways to think, challenge us, give us tools for evaluation of our marriage and ways to get to the next level. We do a marriage retreat every year.

There are different kinds of marriage retreats. Sometimes, Susan and I go to a big conference style retreat, where we're in a large auditorium with hundreds or thousands of people. Familylife does several of these each year. They are highly structured, highly organized, and highly excellent.

On the other end of the spectrum are very small, guided retreats with just a handful of people. Often a small group or a small church will ask someone outside their church to lead one of these (I've led many of them for churches). They'll go away for a night and have guided exercises and good teaching.

Susan and I recommend BOTH. Sometimes we do the larger more fancy kind. Other years we're a part of the smaller more intimate kind. Both are important and you should shake up the kind of retreat you attend.

Marriage retreats are an important activity for churches to plan. Make room for them in your church schedule.

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CHECKLIST

continued from page 10

- Write down the objectives for the group sponsoring the retreat.
 - Choose a theme based upon the purpose of retreat.
 - Write down the specific objectives for the actual retreat.
 - Write down the major blocks of time and activities.
 - Include food preparation, if needed.
 - Check these against objectives.
 - Look at your church calendar for when a retreat could best be held; choose the best time considering other schedules as well.
 - Choose the best facility for your purpose; make sure deposit is paid; confirm reservations.
 - Choose leader(s) or resource person(s) for your theme.
 - OR
 - You can let a specific person choose topics, based on your objectives.
 - Decide honorarium based on fees and expenses if a visiting leader is chosen.
 - Begin promotion — communicate excitement about objectives, dates, schedule as known.
- ### 2-3 months ahead
- Saturate all aspects of planning with prayer!
 - Keep promoting via bulletins, news, mailings, handouts, and word of mouth.
 - You will need to communicate the following:
 1. specific information, including objectives;
 2. registration fees and deadlines (consider collecting registration with a deposit so participants will commit to the time away and you'll have funds to pay facility deposit or program supplies ahead of time);
 3. itinerary with the time schedule.
 - Visit the site, if possible, to familiarize yourself, particularly if you haven't been there before.

1 month ahead

- Keep praying.
- Keep publicizing through bulletins, news, mailings, handouts, and word of mouth.
- Assign specific tasks to teams.
- Orient, train, and motivate leaders/teams.
- Give clear job expectations to leaders.
- Be clear with leaders about time commitments.
- Follow up with individuals regarding their progress on tasks assigned.
- Familiarize your leaders with the facility use agreement and relevant policies.

2-3 weeks ahead

- Continue to pray.
- Keep publicizing, ESPECIALLY by word of mouth.
- If cooking food, plan meals based on registrations.
- Hand out itinerary and things to bring.
- Check in with leaders about progress with their areas.

1 week ahead

- Pray some more!
- If you need to, meet with planning committee once more to finalize.

Retreat

- Enjoy!
- Have a time for reflection and feedback with participants.
- Hand out evaluations before closing program.

Post-retreat

- Meet with planning committee to go over evaluations.
- Make note of what worked and what didn't for the next time.
- Follow up with individuals to continue meeting your objectives.
- Note: The Christian Camping International publication "Seven Steps for Effective Retreats" (part of their Focus series) is quite good. I recommend it highly. You can reach CCI at www.cciusa.org.

Tips from experienced retreat leaders

- Personal contact via word of mouth is the BEST promotion!
- Choose at least three people to invite people individually.
- When deciding price, give scholarships instead of lowering price.
- Budget for a positive balance (i.e., charge \$5 extra to cover unexpected expenses).
- Usually 24-48 hours is typical for length of retreat — but it can be more or less.
- Be sure to allow for flexibility, spontaneity. Be open to the Spirit!
- Over-plan (plan for more than you'll actually include in any one event) so there are no lapses, but allow for flexibility.
- Allow time for worship, unstructured time, input, reflection, and reaction.
- Individual sessions should be 90 minutes maximum.
- Always plan optional strategies in case of a change of circumstances (i.e., weather factors).
- Choose a site that is not too far away and not too close — it's good to have a sense of being apart from your usual setting.
- The site should match your objectives for gathering.
- Be able to specify what kind of space you need (spaces for gathering the whole group together, as well as breakout spaces for small group activities, for example).
- Consider the number of people desirable for your particular objectives. Bigger is not necessarily better.
- Touch base with your planning committee at least once during the retreat to review schedule and process, and make any adjustments required.

If appropriate, offer classes or groups for follow-up after the retreat.
—Provided by the The United Methodist Church, Discipleship Ministries

Pick a goal and weave your theme

GOALS

Every retreat or getaway should have a clear purpose, a set of goals, and a plan for take a ways or follow-up. When you determine what you're doing and why you're doing it, then you'll be better able to sort through ideas and possibilities more easily. The first question you need to ask is, "What do we want to accomplish through this event?" Possible answers include:

- Help participants grow closer to God
- Promote connection among participants
- Teach how the Bible applies to every day life
- Nurture spiritual formation or direction
- Equip participants to become more involved in ministry or take on leadership roles
- Launch an upcoming shift or vision within the ministry, group, or church
- Create a specific space for prayer, silence, reflection, or discussion about a particular topic.

What will determine if your retreat is a success? Once you know what you're trying to accomplish, you can consider the best way to reach your goals and how to navigate away from ideas and activities that don't help you fulfill them.

THEMES

The organization team should pray and ask God to reveal a theme and Scripture. Invite each leader to spend time praying and see if there are any common themes that emerge. Whatever theme the team selects, make sure the language is clear and the main idea is easy to grasp. Also consider making the theme sound catchy or memorable. Instead of calling a retreat "Sharing Jesus" or "Evangelism," consider "Jesus—Too Good To Keep To Yourself." Whatever theme you choose, look for opportunities to weave it into every part of the event so each participant knows the main idea you're trying to convey.

Do not try to weave more than one theme into a retreat. We've been part of retreats that have tried to combine up to three different themes and ideas. The result is confusion and a lack of cohesion for "Be careful not to slip into the temptation of choosing a decorating theme and then trying to find a verse to go with it. One retreat had a ton of decorating ideas for a garden theme and chose a 'garden' verse. It felt forced and awkward."

—A retreat planner

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BE GRACIOUS AND PATIENT WITH THE JUSTIN BIEBERS OF THE WORLD



MATT MOORE

Christian blogger and guest columnist for The Christian Post

myopinion

I know this is going to be kind of hard to believe (*sarcasm*), but most new Christians don't pop out of the spiritual chute morally sophisticated or biblically articulate. They are almost always a bit rough around the edges in the way they speak, act, and communicate their faith. Lord knows I was!

If you had sat down to have a conversation with me three months post-conversion, I would have said something like, "I love Jesus and stuff, but I'm never going to be like those stick-up-butt church folks" as I sipped on my fifth glass of Merlot and chain-smoked my Marlboros.

My faith was genuine; I promise you that. The new life that had been poured into my heart through Christ was vibrant and effecting real changes in my life. I had stopped going to bars and gay clubs. I'd stopped guzzling down hard liquor to the point that I blacked out nearly every night. I'd stopped sleeping with and dating men. I'd started going to a church, praying, reading the Bible, spending time with Christians, and thinking non-stop about God. But I did not yet fit nicely into the image of what many church people envisioned me to be and act like. I was still a bit jaded in my attitude, liked my wine a little too



Years ago, Bieber appeared with Church Lady (Dana Carvey) on Saturday Night Live. Sadly, the Church Lady character is a fair representation of how many people view Christ followers.

"It was a process. It still is a process. And I think that Christians forget this sometimes. Being born again is just the beginning of a beautiful, slow, and sometimes awkward sanctifying process."

much, loved my cigarettes, and even dropped an f-bomb here or there just to satisfy that rebellious urge still wiggling around in my heart.

As time passed and my relationship

with Jesus grew, the sanctifying hand of his Spirit started to touch these parts of my life. I began to enjoy things in moderation, rather than indulge them. I started to grasp how much Jesus loves his church, which caused my love for her to grow. My understanding of grace deepened and I began extending it toward the hyper-religious folks that got on my nerves. The Spirit of God continually gave (and gives) me a more full understanding of the gospel and wisdom to apply it in various areas of my life. But this took time.

It was a process. It still is a process. And I think that Christians forget this sometimes. Being born again is just the beginning of a beautiful, slow, and sometimes awkward sanctifying process.

A few days ago I ran across another video of Justin Bieber sharing his new-

found love for Jesus — and more Christians (who don't know him and make rash judgments based on a three-minute video clip) criticizing him. Ever since Bieber came out about his faith, many Christians have flocked to social media to accuse him of being disingenuous because he doesn't articulate things quite as clearly as they'd like him to.

"Too much love talk; not enough sin and repentance talk. Too much talk about 'God'; not enough about Jesus."

Umm . . . okay. Likewise, a couple of years ago when Shia LeBouf professed faith in Christ, many Christians violently attacked his profession because he said the word "sh*t" in his interview.

Can we just give these guys a break?

Yes, holiness is important and a distinguishing mark of the believer. I'm all about some Christlikeness. But they've been following Jesus for what — [looks at watch] — three and half hours? You can't expect people who have been drowning in iniquity for years to emerge from their "sinner's prayer" squeaky-clean. Justification is instantaneous, but sanctification is far from speedy. Jesus himself knows this, and he extends great grace and patience toward the frailty of those who follow him.

Though Peter publicly denied him, Jesus didn't hop on his first century equivalent to a Facebook account and accuse Peter of being a fraud. Believe it or not, knowing beforehand exactly what would happen, Jesus told Peter how he would soon deny him three times. And he didn't accompany it with a sharp rebuke, either. He actually comforted Peter by telling him, "I have

■ See MATT MOORE on next page

Casinos, lotteries & online gaming – all a pack of lies



CLINT DECKER

President and Evangelist with Great Awakenings, Inc.

hopefortoday

Clay Center, Kansas – Gambling is a worldwide activity that has been around for much of human history. However, in modern times it has scaled like never before due to technology and public acceptance. Elected officials see the financial benefit of gambling, making it more accessible, and the church has muted its opposition..

The gambling industry in partnership with government and business have conspired together to produce a masterful public relations strategy. It promotes gambling as a fun recreational activity that also provides



Hollywood Casino at the Kansas Speedway.

needed public funding for education or other worthy causes.

On the surface it all seems innocent, but at its core gambling is a wretched vice. This evil is built on a flashy, well-orchestrated scheme of stealing. Except, rather than doing it secretly, players willingly fork over their cash hand over fist. They give the card dealer, the grocery store clerk or the

online website their hard earned income in return for a false hope of a jackpot rarely seen.

This devilish vice has been destroying lives for centuries and now more than ever. According to a gambling treatment organization, over 80 percent of Americans have gambled on some level foolishly giving over \$500 billion to these crafty thieves. On top

of that it costs our economy over \$40 billion, which comes from credit losses to businesses due to a gamblers unpaid debt and for the expense of social services to get them help.

Additionally, gambling can lead to job loss, bankruptcy, fraud, depression, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse and much, much more. Get the picture? Every time I watch a TV add extolling the virtues of gambling I yell "It's a lie!" Ask any family member of someone who has a gambling problem if they think it is just a "harmless recreational activity that is for the good of the economy and jobs."

The Scripture is spot on when it comes to gambling saying, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Timothy 6:10). The love of money drives this evil and its misplaced love has caused people to

■ See CLINT DECKER on next page

HEADS UP KANSAS PRO-LIFERS!

14th ANNUAL KANSANS FOR LIFE

Valentine Banquet

Tuesday, Feb. 11 (3 days before Valentines!)



John Ensor serves as the President of Passion-Life, a global missions initiative dedicated to helping churches and mission workers disarm the powers of death with the gospel of life in countries like China that suffer the highest rates of abortion, infanticide, and gendercide.

Books by John Ensor include: *The Great Work of the Gospel: How We Experience God's Grace*; *Doing Things Right in Matters of the Heart*; *Innocent Blood: Challenging the Powers of Death with the Gospel of Life*; *Answering the Call: Saving the Innocent, One Woman at a Time*; *Stand for Life: A Students Guide to Making the Case and Saving Lives*, with Scott Klusendorf.

Special Speaker

John Ensor

Ritz-Charles

137th & Antioch, Overland Park

5 p.m. Silent Auction & Social Time

6:30 Seating

7 p.m. Banquet & Program

Free-Will Offering

RSVP REQUIRED: by seat, small group or table of 10. Tables of 10, or smaller group can be reserved under one name now with number in party, but you must report names of all in party by Feb. 1 to insure seats. Join our free email alert list and/or become a KFL member for \$20 a year at www.kfl.org.

Sold-out Crowd Expected!
Reserve Your Seats Early!

RSVP by Feb. 1 at 913-642-5433 or kansansforlife@aol.com

MATT MOORE

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prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." — Luke 22:32. Grace and patience.

In the first few chapters of Revelation, we see Jesus addressing churches that are far from perfect, but they are nevertheless his churches. He is definitely stern with them and demands — not requests — that they straighten their crooked paths. But notice that in the same sentence in which he warns of the judgment coming upon some for their refusal to repent, he also expresses how he gave them time to repent (Revelation 2:21). Jesus gives time. He gives us time to grow in the knowledge of the truth, respond to conviction, turn from our sins, and put on the new self that is made in his image. Grace and patience.

If Jesus is so gracious and patient with faith-professing people in their weakness and imperfection, shouldn't we be as well? Yes! We should!

I understand that fighting for the authenticity and purity of the faith is important, and there is a need and place

for pointing out false teaching, insincere professions of faith, etc. But God bless, I think many of us just like to hear ourselves talk. Maybe some of us need to spend less time saturating ourselves in the podcasts, blogs, and books of hypercritical Christian teachers, and spend more time in the Bible — learning to emulate the grace and patience of its author.

When people are just beginning to profess faith in Christ, we need to give them the benefit of the doubt. If in the years to come, their way of life demonstrates that the gospel has had no real and lasting change on their souls, so be it. But we shouldn't judgmentally jump to conclusions about the state of their hearts when they're just beginning to crawl toward Jesus. If we know them personally, let's encourage them in the faith. If they're some big celebrity like Shia LeBouf or Justin Bieber, let's not immediately jump to criticizing them on our social media.

Let's be gracious. Let's be patient. Time will tell what is true.

Matt Moore is a Christian blogger who was formerly engaged in a gay lifestyle. You can read more about him at

CLINT DECKER

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wander away from their jobs, families and God.

Yes, our businesses and families need to make an income to survive, but let us do it with a moral conscience. Do what is wise, right and good. Start by turning to God for His help in providing an-

swers where there is financial need, no matter if it is in the hundreds or millions of dollars. Then let us patiently wait for His answer, turning from relying on our own wisdom. Real hope is not found in dollars and cents but in Almighty God who is Creator and Owner of all.

Clint Decker is President & Evangelist with Great Awakenings, Inc. cdecker@greatawakenings.org

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PLEASE NOTE: Your item must be in by
the 3rd Wednesday of each month for
following month's issue.

Family Events, Christian Concerts, Theatre, Youth Events, Meetings, Clubs, Bible Studies, Family Fun, Speakers and More!



FEB 3 **BETHEL WORSHIP NIGHTS. KANSAS CITY MUSIC HALL, 301 W. 13TH ST., KANSAS CITY. FEATURING: STEFFANY GRETZINGER (PICTURED), WILLIAM MATTHEWS, AND OTHERS**

Praise and Worship songs of Zion. 913-334-1009.

CGMA NW MO CHAPTER MEETING, GOSPEL MUSIC AND POTLUCK. SECOND SATURDAY. Faith Assembly of God Church, South 13 Hwy, Polo, MO. Travel North on I-35 North, go North of Liberty to the Polo/Lathrop Exit. Turn right onto 116 Hwy. Go 12 miles to 13 Hwy. Turn left and go ¼ mile. pegcia@msn.com.

MOMENT OF TRUTH BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH. THIRD SATURDAY in January, May, September & October, 7pm. 310 Randolph Rd, Claycomo, MO. Gospel music sing. 816-452-4426.

RADIANT LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD. LAST SUNDAY, 6:30 p.m. Hwy. 33, Kearney, MO. Open mike. Gospel sing.

GOSPEL JAMBOREE. SECOND THURSDAY, 7 p.m. Life Christian Center, 1650 E Langsford Road, Lee's Summit, MO. 816-878-4694.

PARADISE BAPTIST CHURCH. SECOND SUNDAY, 6 p.m. Pot luck dinner at 5 p.m. Paradise Missouri. 816-591-1020.

CLASSES, SEMINARS, CONFERENCES

FIBROMYALGIA SUPPORT GROUP MEETING. Lee's Summit, MO. Mark Zwink, RN, is in the process of organizing a new support group in the Lee's Summit area. Call with your suggestions, needs, and topics you are interested in discussing. 913-205-4683.

DISCOVER CHRIST. February 2, 6:30 pm. St. John Francis Regis Church, 8941 James A. Reed Road, Kansas City, MO 64138. What is the meaning of life? Why does Jesus matter? Who is the Holy Spirit? These questions and others will be addressed throughout a 7-week course which includes a meal (prepared by others), a DVD presentation and small group discussion. Open to Christians, non-Christians and others. 816-204-7267.

INTERNATIONAL FOCUS WEEK. February 2-3. Ozark Christian College, 1111 N. Main St., Joplin, MO 64801. Special speakers will bring messages focused on the theme for the week and workshops will be available covering various topics and themes in global missions. This year's focus will be on Biblical Justice featuring Greg Darley with JIM as the main guest speaker. Other speakers will include Wade Landers with Blackbox, and Stephanie Freed with Rapha House. 417-626-1234.

IF: GATHERING CONFERENCE. February 5, 4:00 pm & February 6, 9:00 am. Indian Creek Community Church, 12480 S. Blackbob Rd., Olathe, KS 66062. \$15. Seeks to gather, equip, and unleash, this generation of women to live out God's calling on their lives.

FIRST FRIDAY EXPLOSION! February 5, 2016, 7:00 p.m. Faith Temple Church (1162 SW Lincoln, corners of Lincoln and Munson), Topeka, KS. Come expecting a mighty "Move of God!" There will be singing, dancing, inspirational speaking, and most importantly, the "Word of God!" Everyone is Welcome! Your Blessing is waiting for you ... don't leave it at the altar! You will not want to miss this "FREE" event! 785-235-1834.



MAR 5 **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND COLLEGE EXPO. 9:30 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M. AT THE COLONIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 9500 WORNALL, KANSAS CITY, MO.**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING PREVENTION CONFERENCE. February 6, 9:00 pm. Westside Family Church, 8500 Woodsonia Dr., Lenexa, KS 66227. Sponsored by KC Street Hope.

SAMARITAN MINISTRIES INFORMATION SEMINAR SHARE. February 6, 10:00 am. Nall Avenue Church of the Nazarene, 6301 Nall Ave., Prairie Village, KS 66202. FREE. Learn all about an excited Christian alternative to health insurance. Samaritan Ministries is a not for profit Christian ministry that has been around for 20 years and currently serves more than 56,000 households who are sharing more than \$15 million in medical needs each month. RSVP by calling 913-384-3040.

GOOD NEWS CLUB TRAINING. February 6, 9:00 am-4:00 pm. HOPE Church, 2648 N. 18th St., Kansas City, KS. February 27, 9:00 am-4:00 pm. Frederick Boulevard Baptist Church, 5502 Frederick Blvd., St. Joseph, MO. Sponsored by Child Evangelism Fellowship. Training is required for all volunteers (adults and teens) and includes: Good News Club demo & curriculum overview, Leading a child to Christ (counseling for salvation), teaching with Music, Teaching the Bible lesson & the salvation invitation, Scripture memory, Review games, Missions, Prayer and Wonder Time (discipleship teaching), Organizing/promoting your club. Registration is required by phone 816-358-1138 or e-mail staff@cef-gkca.org.

AVOID PROBATE. February 9, 7:00 pm. Lewis Living

Trust Center. 700 NE Langsford, Lee's Summit, MO 64063. 816-524-3200.

HOMESCHOOL 101. Feb. 11, 7:00 PM. Country Meadows Baptist Church, 4901 South Lee's Summit Road, Kansas City, MO 64136. Families for Home Education offers this free class for families considering home education in Missouri. MO law and record-keeping requirements are presented, as well as curriculum ideas and area homeschooling activities. (877) 696-6343

WOMEN OF FAITH LOVED FAREWELL TOUR. February 12-13. Sprint Center, 1407 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64106.

THE ART OF MARRIAGE CONFERENCE. February 12, 6:30-9:00 pm & February 13, 9:00 am-3:30 pm. Pisgah Baptist Church, 1 ½ miles east of Excelsior Springs on Hwy. 10, Excelsior Springs, MO. Cost \$35 per couple. The Art of Marriage video event weaves together expert teaching, real-life stories, humorous vignettes, and more to portray the challenges and the beauty of God's design for marriage. Six engaging video sessions are interspersed with projects for couples to complete in a Friday night-Saturday schedule. 816-630-5121.

LEARN, LAUGH, & LOVE. February 18, 1:00-2:00 pm. Jewish Community Campus, Board Room, 5801 W. 115th St., Leawood, KS 66211. FREE. Learn about the latest research and advice regarding aging and romance. A lively and informative talk led by Sally King, LCSW, will touch on the emotional, physical and social

CONCERTS

BETHEL WORSHIP NIGHTS. February 3, 2:00 pm (breakout) & 7:00 pm (concert). Kansas City Music Hall, 301 W. 13th St., Kansas City, MO 64105. General admission \$25 Breakout tickets \$79. Featuring: Steffany Gretzinger, William Matthews, Kalley Heiligenthal, Leeland, Cory Asbury, and Matt Stinton. 2:00 pm Bethel Breakouts Begins.

ALL THE EARTH IS HOLLY GROUND SPRING TOUR. March 3, 7:00 pm. Victory Ministry & Sports Complex, 3405 S. Hammons Blvd., Joplin, MO 64804. Tenth Avenue North, Hawk Nelson & I Am They. 417-206-6886.

DAVID C. SMART. March 4. Homer's Coffee House, 7126 W 80th St., Overland Park, KS 66204. 913-381-6022.

REND COLLECTIVE-AS FAMILY WE GO-USA TOUR. March 5, 7:00 pm. First Baptist Raytown, 10500 E. 350 Hwy., Raytown, MO 64138. \$20 General admission and \$40 deluxe. www.echoconcerts.com.

BEAUTIFUL OFFERINGS TOUR. March 17, 7:00 pm. Victory Ministry & Sports Complex, 3405 S Hammons Blvd., Joplin, MO 64804. Big Daddy Weave, Plumb, & Jordan Feliz. 471-206-6886

THE COLLINGSWORTH FAMILY. March 19, 7:00 pm. Kansas City Christian College, Cowen Memorial Audi-

torium, 7020 W. 74th St., Overland Park, KS 66226. 913-722-0272.

TOBYMAC. March 19, 7:00 pm. Sprint Center, 1407 Grand Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64106. 816-949-7100.

PHIL AND PAM MORGAN. March 20, 10:30 am. First Assembly of God, 1050 W 19th St., Higginsville, MO. 660-584-2225.

TIM HAWKINS LIVE. April 3, 6:30 pm. First Baptist Raytown, 10500 E. 350 Hwy., Raytown, MO 64138. 816-353-1994.

SANDI PATTY-THE FAREWELL TOUR. April 7, 7:00 pm. First Baptist Raytown, 10500 E. 350 Hwy., Raytown, MO 64138. 816-353-1994.

SOUTHERN GOSPEL (CALL FOR GROUPS)

ALPHA OMEGA CHRISTIAN MUSIC ASSOCIATION MONTHLY MEETING, PRAYER, DEVOTION, POTLUCK AND JAM. FIRST FRIDAY, 7pm. 10035 E. Westport Rd., Indep., MO 64052.

MO-KAN GOSPEL MUSIC ASSOCIATION POTLUCK AND JAM. FOURTH FRIDAY (except for Nov. & Dec. when we meet on the 3rd Fri.). Northland Christian Church, 6120 NE 48th St., KCMO. 913-432-0359.

PENTECOSTAL TABERNACLE CHURCH. SECOND SATURDAY, 6pm. 341 S. 72nd St., Kansas City, KS 66111.

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needs of older adults and the importance of connection. 913-327-8044.

PREACHING-TEACHING CONVENTION. February 22-24. Ozark Christian College, 1111 N. Main St., Joplin, MO 64801. Main Speakers include: Dave Stone, Danny Curry, Jordan Rice, Cam Huxford, Rusty George, Michael DeFazio, and Dudley Rutherford. 417-626-1234.

SOUTH KANSAS CITY AGLOW. February 24, 9:30 am. Grandview Assembly of God, 12400 Grandview Rd., Grandview, MO 64030. Come join us, Worship provided by Warriors Come Home Ministries. Speaker is Sherrel Allen, Author/Artist. She will bring a message of Love and Hope. Child Care Reservations: Mary at 816-540-2590 or Jeanne at 913-893-6577. 816-966-1033.

ANNUAL BLACK HISTORY PROGRAM. February 24, 2016, at 7:00 pm. Faith Temple Church, 1162 SW Lincoln, (corners of Lincoln and Munson), Topeka, KS. Everyone is Welcome! This is a FREE EVENT. For additional information, please contact the church at 785-235-1834.

AVOID PROBATE. February 25, 7:00 pm. Lewis Living Trust Center. 700 NE Langsford, Lee's Summit, MO 64063. 816-524-3200.

INFORMATION MEETING. February 25, 6:00-8:00 pm. Nall Avenue Baptist Church, 6701 Nall Ave., Prairie Village, KS. Come hear about Classical Education and how you can homeschool using the Classical Method! www.classicalconversations.com.

GENREAL KC 2016. February 26, 4:00 pm & February 27, 5:00 pm. Olathe Bible Church, 13700 W. 151st St., Olathe, KS 66062. GenReal KC is a multigenerational event for women to connect and grow.

CLASSICAL CONVERSATIONS OPEN HOUSE. February 29, 8:25 am-3:30 pm. Nall Avenue Baptist Church, 6701 Nall Avenue, Prairie Village, KS. Come join is for a day of Classical Christian community! awatson@classicalconversations.com

HER CHOICE TO HEAL CLASS. Starting in March. If Not For Grace Ministries. Join us for a 9 week class. Are you looking for spiritual and emotional peace after experiencing abortion? For more information, contact Jama at jedlund@infg.org. or 816-847-2911.

WORLD VISION PRESENTS: FIGHT NIGHT WITH DRS. LES AND LESLIE PARROTT. March 4, 7:00 pm. College Church of the Nazarene, 2020 E. Sheridan St., Olathe, KS. A fun date night for couples of any age or stage. Filled with humor, fresh insight, and practical, new strategies for turning conflict into a means for

deeper intimacy.

WEEKEND TO REMEMBER MARRIAGE GETAWAY. March 11-March 13. Overland Park Marriott, 10800 Metcalf Ave., Overland Park, KS 66210. Special getaway room rate: \$106.00/night. Event price \$14999 per person registration. Sponsored by Family Life.

IF NOT FOR GRACE MINISTRIES VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION. March 12, 9:00 am. Crown Pointe Church, 5950 NE Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit, MO 64064. For RSVP rbitterman@infg.org.

JOURNEY TO THE CROSS. March 26, 1:00 pm. Blue Ridge Bible Church, 8524 Blue Ridge Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64138. Free and open to the public. This family program invites children and adults to walk the path that Jesus walked. Small groups of people walk to 13 sites for activities that relate to the Passion event. At each station, their senses are engaged through experience-focused activity that teaches the biblical Passion account. 816-942-3301.

UNEXPECTED PLACES WOMEN'S CONFERENCE. April 23, 8:30 am. Olathe Community Center, 1205 E Kansas City Rd., Olathe, KS 66062. \$40 includes Conference, light breakfast and lunch. Through worship, prayer, teaching, and inspiring stories you will...Connect with God and others, Discover the opportunity God has for you in this season, Receive the Lord's power and provision for unique purpose, Learn about the given and take of transformation, Find inspiration and encouragement through the stories of women like you. www.unexpectedplaces.me e-mail: unexpectedplacesteam@gmail.com

SPECIAL CHURCH EVENTS

KINDERGARTEN PREVIEW EVENTS. February 4, 4:30-5:45 pm & February 16, 8:15-9:30 pm. Maranatha Christian Academy, North Campus, 15000 W. 63rd St., Shawnee, KS 66217. www.mca-eagles.org

RIBBON CUTTING/OPEN HOUSE. February 9, 4:00-6:00 pm. Crown Pointe Church, 5950 NE Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit, MO 64064. The Lee's Summit Chamber of Commerce together with If Not For Grace Ministries will be celebrating One Year in their new office space. Come join us for refreshments as INFG shares about the positive impact this ministry is having in the community as well as surrounding cities

through the dedication of volunteers and staff. Contact Richard at rbitterman@infg.org or call 816-847-2911.

KANSANS FOR LIFE VALENTINE BANQUET. February 11, 5:00 pm (Silent Auction & Social Time), 6:30 pm (Seating), 7:00 pm (Banquet & Program). The Ritz-Charles, 137th & Antioch, Overland Park, KS. Speaker John Ensor serves as the President of PassionLife, a global missions initiative dedicated to helping churches and mission workers disarm the powers of death with the gospel of life in countries like China that suffer the highest rates of abortion, infanticide, and gendercide. RSVP required: e-mail kansansfor-life@aol.com or call 913-642-5433.

FIRST ANNUAL BISHOP APPRECIATION SERVICE HONORING BISHOP R. K. LASSITER, SR. February 14, 2016, 3:30 p.m. Faith Temple Church (1162 SW Lincoln, corners of Lincoln and Munson), Topeka, KS. Everyone is Welcome! For additional information, please contact the church at 785-235-1834.

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL. February 16, 5:00 pm. Summit Christian Academy, 1450 SW Jefferson St., Lee's Summit, MO 64081. Those attending this educational event will travel through the continents, experiencing festive music, art, mission projects, and delicious food from around the world. Special features this year includes a Parade of Flags, Chinese Tea Ceremony and Games around the World. 816-525-1480.

OPEN HOUSE EVENTS: K-12. February 18, 6:30 pm. Maranatha Christian Academy, South Campus, 6826 Lackman Rd., Shawnee, KS 66217. www.mcs-

eagles.org.

HARVESTER'S FOOD DISTRIBUTION. February 18, 4:00 pm. Fort Osage Church of the Nazarene, 19333 E. 24 Hwy., Independence, MO 64056. Perishable Food Distribution to all who come through. Pre-registration is across the road at Harmony Heights Baptist Church parking lot. Then continue through our parking lot, picking up perishable foods from Harvesters. 816-796-5879.

BE CROWNED. Feb. 20. Echo Church, 203 N. State Route 7, Pleasant Hill, MO 64080. A royal day of pampering for single Moms. Our sole purpose to be the hands and feet of Jesus to precious women who hold the hardest job on earth. Free, but need to register. 816-987-0067 www.echochurch.tv

CHILDREN OF THE WORLD CHOIR. February 21, 9:00-10:30 am. Central Church of the Nazarene, 12600 W. 87th St. Pkway., Lenexa, KS 66215. Through the powerful medium of song, dance, spoken word, and creative media, Children of the World provides a compelling message of hope and opportunity through this year's Rescue Tour. 913-541-2600

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION & COLLEGE EXPO. March 5, 9:30 am-2:00 pm. Colonial Presbyterian Church, 9500 Wornall, Kansas City, MO. Visit with 50 colleges from the Midwest, 15 K-12 local Christian schools and home schooling organizations. Attend classes such as Homeschooling 101, How to Prepare for College,

■ calendar continued on next page

1 in 3 women needs a safe, confidential place to share the pain and loss abortion has caused in their life.

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and more. 816-524-4522. www.metrovoicenews.com
NORTHLAND K-12 OPEN HOUSE. March 7, 6:30 pm. Gladstone Community Center, 6901 N. Holmes St., Gladstone, MO 64118. Visit with K-12 Christian schools North of the River. Sponsored by Metro Voice Newspaper. www.metrovoicenews.com 816-524-4522.

EASTER SUNRISE EXTRAVAGANZA. March 27, 2016, 6:30 - 8:00 a.m. KC Power & Light District, 13th & Grand Boulevard, Kansas City Mo. All the Churches in Kansas City are cordially invited to attend a Solemn Assembly of the Body of Kansas City. Come together as we put on the garment of PRAISE - JESUS is RISEN. For more Information call: 816-215-5826

2016 LOBBY DAY. April 5. Capital, Jefferson City, MO. Sponsored by Missouri Right to Life. Hope to see many pro-lifers there. More info to come. 816-353-4113.

LIGHT HOUSE GALA. April 9, 6:00 pm-10:00 pm. Armacost Museum, 4200 E. 135th St., Grandview, MO 64030. All proceeds go to support the ministries of the LIGHT House. 816-898-1094.

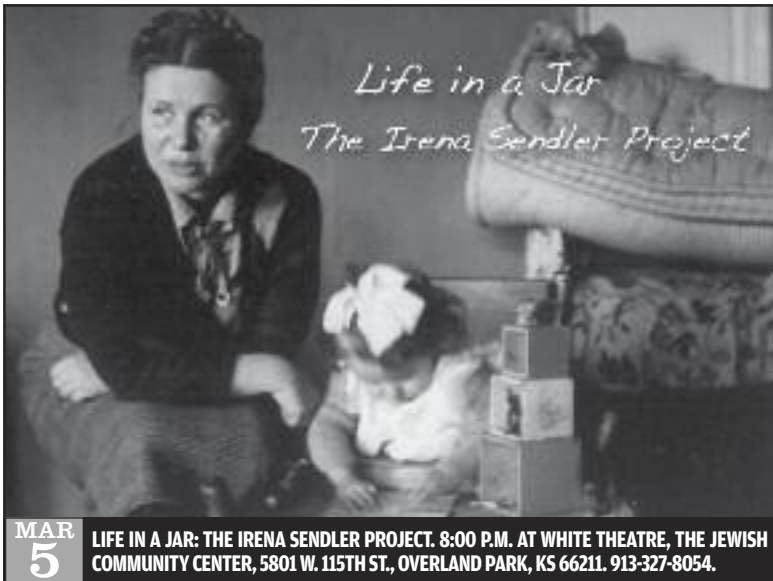
EAGLE EGG 5K. April 16, 9:00 am. Summit Christian Academy, 1500 SW Jefferson, Lee's Summit, MO 64081.

A TASTE FOR LIFE. April 23. The Midland Theatre, Kansas City, MO. Benefits Rachel House.

FINE ARTS

IN THE MOOD. Through February 21. Quality Hill Playhouse, 303 W. 10th St., Kansas City, MO. A swinging cabaret tribute to the great band leaders of the Big Band era. 816-421-1700.

HAIRSPRAY JR. February 11, 10:00 am School Day Performance. February 11, 7:00 pm; February 12, 7:00 pm; February 13, 2:00 pm & 7:00 pm; February 14, 2:00 pm. Bell Culture Events Center, MidAmerica Nazarene, 2030 E. College Way, Olathe, KS 66062.



LIFE IN A JAR: THE IRENA SENDLER PROJECT. 8:00 P.M. AT WHITE THEATRE, THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER, 5801 W. 115TH ST., OVERLAND PARK, KS 66211. 913-327-8054.

Sponsored by CYT. www.cytkc.org.

UNDERGROUND. February 12-13, 7:30 pm. Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts, 1601 Broadway Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64108. Revisit this passionate portrayal of the Underground Railroad, be inspired by the heroics of those who would not be slaves and the everyday people who would not stand for it either. 816-994-7222.

AMY GRANT WITH THE KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY. February 12-14. Kauffman Center, 1601 Broadway Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64108. No. 1 hits such as "Baby, Baby," "Every Heartbeat," "That's What Love

is For," "I Will Remember You," "El Shaddai" and others. 816-994-7222.

ANIMAL CARNIVAL. February 13 & 15. Puppetry Arts Institute, 11025 E. Winner Rd., Independence, MO 64052. 816-833-9777.

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM. February 13, 18, 20, 25, 27 at 7:30 pm; February 14, 21, 28 at 2:00 pm. White Theatre, The Jewish Community Center, 5801 W. 115th St., Overland Park, KS 66211. Rated PG. 913-327-8054.

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FAMILY OUTINGS

COMPLIMENTARY WWI MUSEUM TOUR. Thursdays through February 25, 2:00 pm. National World War I Museum and Memorial, 100 W. 26th St., Kansas City, MO 64108.

FROZEN IN TIME: IMAGES OF WONDED KNEE AND PINE RIDGE. 1890-91. Through March 14. Central Liberty, 14 W. 10th St, Kansas City, MO 64105. This new exhibit features more than 60 of those photos drawn from the Library of Congress, Denver Public Library, Nebraska State Historical Society, and other repositories as well as from Library's Missouri Valley Special Collections.

DA VINCI: THE EXHIBITION. Through May 1, 2016. Tuesday-Thursday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm; Friday-Saturday, 10:00 am-6:00 pm; Sunday, 12:00-5:00 pm. Union Station, 30 W. Pershing Rd., Kansas City, MO 64108. Featuring more than 65 fully built life-size inventions, more than 20 fine art studies and dozens of stunning displays, guests will learn the complex beginnings and lifetime achievements of Da Vinci through his discoveries in art, engineering, flight, hydraulics, music, light and more.

KC REMODEL + GARDEN SHOW. February 12-14. American Royal Center, 1800 Genessee St., Kansas City, MO 64102. 816-931-4686.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT AT POWELL GARDENS. February 14, 9:00 am. Powell Gardens, 1609 NW Hwy. 50, Kingsville, MO 64061. Join us in a nationwide survey of birds. There will be two sessions (morning and afternoon): The morning session, which is great for all ages, begins indoors and focuses on birds that frequent feeders around the Visitor Educational Center. In the afternoon session, Alan leads a hike of the Byron Shutz Nature Trail to count our more reclusive feathered friends. The fee includes either or both sessions; please register for each session you plan to attend. 816-697-2600 ext. 209.

WOMEN JURISTS AHEAD OF THEIR TIME. February 17, 7:30 pm. Yates-Gill College Union, William Jewel College campus, Liberty, MO. Free. By Judge Mary Russell, Missouri Supreme Court Justice. 816-415-5223.

TEDDY BEAR CLINIC. February 20, 10:00 am-2:00 pm. Kansas City Zoo, 6800 Zoo Dr., Kansas City, MO 64132. Do you have a teddy bear or stuffed animal in need of some TLC? Bring your favorite friends to the Teddy Bear Clinic and let the volunteers from Kansas City Young Matrons nurse them back to health. We will fix rips; tars and holes and give them a good fluff. Once they are back to tip-top shape, they will receive a clean bill of health. 816-595-1234.

BREAKFAST WITH THE PRESIDENTS. February 27, 10:00 am. Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop & Farm, 1200 E. Kansas City Rd., Olathe, KS 66061. Cost is \$8/ages 3 and up and also includes a photo as well as admission to the historic site. Enjoy breakfast and crafts with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. 913-971-5111.

GREATER KANSAS CITY INTERNATIONAL AUTO SHOW. March 2-6. Kansas City Convention & Entertainment Facilities, 301 W. 13th St., Kansas City, MO 64105.

29th ANNUAL SPRING FASHION SHOW & LUNCHEON. March 12. Bingham-Waggoner Estate, Independence, MO. As you and your friends enjoy a wonderful meal, watch as the models display fashions and accessories from the unique offerings of the Carriage House Boutique. www.bwestate.org 816-461-3491.

SHENYUN PERFORMING ART SHOW. April 1-3, 7:20 pm. Kauffman Center, 1601 Broadway Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64108. 816-994-7200.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

BUILDING BETTER MOMS. The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, 13720 Roe Ave., Leawood, KS. For local mothers of children in early childhood, elementary school, middle school, high school, and for single moms, with both day and evening meeting times available at the Leawood campus. www.cor.org 913-897-0120.

■ calendar continued on next page

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TEDDY BEAR CLINIC. 10:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M. AT THE KANSAS CITY ZOO, 6800 ZOO DR., KANSAS CITY, MO 64132. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL 816-595-1234.

DIVORCECARE AND DIVORCECARE4KIDS. 6:00-7:30 pm. Timothy Lutheran Church, 425 NW RD Mize Road, Blue Springs, MO. Help for those going through or having gone through divorce. 816-228-5300.

WEEKLY - CHRISTIAN BUSINESS MEN'S COMMITTEE. Meets weekly in various parts of the city. Call Jim Mathis, 913-269-6709, for time and location.

WEEKLY - FAITH BASED 12-STEP PROGRAM OF RECOVERY FROM COMPULSIVE OVEREATING.

Call Overeater's Anonymous 913-383-5933 or visit www.kansascityoa.org for more information and to access the schedule of various meetings in the metro area.

MONTHLY - MISSOURI RIGHT TO LIFE CHAPTERS 816-353-4113.

3RD SUNDAY - CANCER SUPPORT GROUP. 6:30-8:00 pm. Beacon Free Baptist Church, 10825 E. 79th Street, Raytown, MO 64138. Connect with others who

share your journey, you are not alone. 816-353-7447.

MONDAY - HEALING ROOMS MINISTRIES. 3:00-6:00 pm. Healing Rooms of Olathe, 1548 E Spruce, Olathe, KS 66061. M-T-W by appointment. www.healingroomsofolathe.com 913-563-2413.

MONDAY - HEALING ROOMS MINISTRIES. 4:00-6:00 pm. Hope City, 5101E. 24th St., Kansas City, MO.

2ND & 4TH MONDAY - MOPS. 9:30 a.m. MOPS. First Baptist Raytown, 10500 E 350 Highway, Raytown, MO Support groups for mothers of preschool-aged children. Offers creative activities, social events & learning opportunities. 816-353-1994.

TUESDAY - IF NOT FOR GRACE PRAYER. 9:30 am. Crown Pointe Church, 5950 NE Lakewood Way, Lee's Summit, MO 64086. kmiller@infq.org

TUESDAY - FEAR NOT SUPPORT GROUP. 7pm. Lakeland Community Church, 913 NW Colbern Rd., Lee's Summit, MO. Christ-Centered support group for anxiety and depression. Material based on the Chris-

tian 12 Steps; Serenity Prayer also Anxiety Centre "The Anxiety/Phobia Workbook" by Edmund Bourne.

TUESDAY - CELEBRATE RECOVERY. 7pm. Holy Cross Lutheran Church, 7851 W. 119th St., OPKS. Christ centered 12-step program for anyone with a hurt, hang-up, or addiction. Contact Craig Hauser, 913-449-7265.

TUESDAY - HEARTLAND HEALING ROOMS. From 7:00-8:30 pm. at Christ Triumphant Church, 401 NE Chipman Rd., Lee's Summit, MO. www.heartlandhealingrooms.org.

1ST TUESDAY - CHRISTIAN NIGHT. 6 - 8 pm. Skate World, I-35 & Shawnee Mission Parkway, Mission, KS. 913-262-0711.

1ST TUESDAY - CREATION SCIENCE ASSOCIATION FOR MID-AMERICA. 7 p.m., Westbrooke Church, 9777 Antioch, Overland Park, KS. Presentation followed by Q&A; Answers to your questions regarding Science and the Bible; "Creation Safaris" (Res. Req'd);

www.csama.org (includes link to FB page) 816-246-4517.

1ST TUESDAY - FIBROMYALGIA SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS. 7:00 pm., Life Springs Church, Neos Youth Center, 206 N. Webster St., Suite 112, Spring Hill, KS. Contact Kim: fibrohopeandhealing@yahoo.com or 337-852-5052.

1ST & 3RD TUESDAY - GRIEF SHARE. 7-8:30pm. Timothy Lutheran Ministries, 425 NW RD Mize Rd., Blue Springs, MO. 816-228-5300.

2ND TUESDAY - EQUIPPING BELIEVERS MID-WEST. 7:00 pm. Blue Spring, Hampton Inn, 900 NW S. Outer Rd., Blue Springs, MO 64015. Free Prayer for healing and freedom from addiction, Free training to heal the sick, evangelize the lost, set the oppressed free. 913-488-6749.

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(from left) Jim Daly: Focus On The Family, Chuck Seinfeld, Insight For Living, John MacArthur, Grace To You, Jane Hunt, Hope In The Night, Alastair Begg, Truth For Life, Tony Evans, The Alternative with Dr. Tony Evans, James MacDonald, Walk In The Word, David Jeremiah, Turning Point, Adrian Rogers, Love Worth Finding, Crawford Loritts, Legacy Ministries, And More! Visit BOTT Online for Program Schedule.

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MOVIES, BOOKS, MUSIC & MORE!

Seven films to look forward to this year

entertainment

by **Ryan Duncan**

Let's be honest, 2015 was a pretty dismal year for movies. Sure, we saw the renewal of great franchises like Star Wars and Jurassic Park, but we also had to suffer through the disappointment of high-profile films like Tomorrowland and The Good Dinosaur. Still, a new year means new movies and it's time to look ahead to the most promising candidates of 2016. Here, in no particular order, are the seven movies to look for in 2016.

Hail, Caesar!

CURRENT RELEASE DATE:
FEBRUARY 5



Stars: Josh Brolin, George Clooney, Alden Ehrenreich, Ralph Fiennes, Jonah Hill, Scarlett Johansson, Tilda Swinton, Channing Tatum

2016's first major comedy, Hail, Caesar!, features a cavalcade of stars and a

self-deprecating premise that's just too good to miss. When the lead actor of a major motion picture is kidnapped by a mysterious group calling itself "The Future", a Hollywood agent (played by Josh Brolin) must find a way to raise \$100,000 to secure his release. Things grow even more complicated however, as he's forced to deal with overbearing directors, scheming gossip columnists, dimwitted actors, and everything else Hollywood can throw at him.

Risen

CURRENT RELEASE DATE:
FEBRUARY 19

Stars: Joseph Fiennes, Tom Felton, Peter Firth, Cliff Curtis

Risen is already making waves in Christian circles for its stirring trailer. The story follows a Roman Centurion (Joseph Fiennes) who is charged by Pontius Pilate to investigate the disappearance of Christ's body and quell an imminent uprising in Jerusalem. Risen



is being billed as a Biblical noir mystery, and honestly, the whole film looks amazing. Christians should keep a sharp eye on this movie, it may just redefine the faith-based genre.

Snowden

CURRENT RELEASE DATE:
MAY 13



Stars: Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Shailene Woodley, Melissa Leo, Zachary Quinto, Nicolas Cage

Based on true events, Snowden chronicles the life of Edward Snowden and his actions leading up to one of the largest classified information leaks in history. Though the film itself is bound to be controversial, the stellar cast list



demands attention. With names like Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Zachary Quinto, and Nicholas Cage attached to the project, Snowden will be interesting to say the least.

God's Not Dead 2

CURRENT RELEASE DATE:
APRIL 1

Stars: Melissa Joan Hart, Jesse Metcalfe, Ray Wise, Ernie Hudson

The Christian phenomenon which swept box offices in 2014 will return this April with a brand new installment. Reversing positions from the previous film, God's Not Dead 2 focuses on a high school teacher (Melissa Joan Hart) who is drawn into an epic court case after quoting the Bible in class. The

movie plans to explore issues like religious freedom, persecution, prayer in public schools, and their effects in modern society. For now, Christians can only wait eagerly until it arrives on April 1.

Silence

CURRENT RELEASE DATE:
UNKNOWN

Stars: Adam Driver, Liam Neeson, Andrew Garfield, Ciarán Hinds

Unlike the other faith-based movies on this list, Silence appears more reminiscent of 2014's Calvary. The tone is much darker, and the story promises difficult questions about faith, forgiveness, and survival. The film's plot takes place in the seventeenth century, where

■ See MOVIES page 19

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Trisha Yearwood joins Tyler Perry's 'The Passion' live cast

by **Christine Thomasos**

The cast of FOX's upcoming musical "The Passion" is starting to unfold with country music legend Trisha Yearwood and Latin singer Prince Royce joining the production as Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, and the disciple Peter, respectively.



YEARWOOD



PERRY

Yearwood, the 51-year-old singer and host of Food Network's "Trisha's Southern Kitchen" said she was thrilled to join the cast, which was partially announced at the Television Critics Association press tour.

"I'm thrilled to join #ThePassionLive airing LIVE March 20 on @FOXTV xo trish," the Grammy Award-winning "How Do I Live" singer tweeted.

Film mogul Tyler Perry will narrate and host the 2-hour musical that will take place in Perry's hometown of New Orleans, and bring a modern-day account of the story of Jesus of Nazareth

to life.

A number of iconic locations throughout New Orleans will be utilized in the live musical event that is also expected to include a local New Orleans audience in the carrying of a 20-foot cross.

Famed biblical events like the Last Supper, Jesus' betrayal at the hands of Judas, his trial by Pontius Pilate, the crucifixion and resurrection will be included in what the president of Fox said will be an inspirational play.

"The Passion' is both wonderfully entertaining and genuinely inspirational," said David Madden, president of entertainment for the Fox Broadcasting Company, in a statement shared with The Christian Post. "We are so thrilled to have the multi-talented Tyler Perry join us for this epic music production. He is the perfect host to lead the cast — and viewers — through the streets of New Orleans in this contemporary re-telling of a timeless story."

The musical will air on Palm Sunday, which executives close to the production hope can bring both Christian and secular audiences together before Easter.

"This Palm Sunday television event is a modern-day production of the



most famous story of all time, full of universal themes, which we hope provides a unifying experience, bringing the sacred and secular together," said Mark Bracco, executive vice president of programming and development for Dick Clark Productions.

Adam Anders, the music producer who has worked on "Glee" and "Rock of Ages," revealed that audiences will witness the story of Jesus being told like never before.

"The Passion' is one of the most exciting and compelling projects that I have ever been involved with," said Anders in a statement to CP. "I cannot wait to bring the greatest-story-ever-told to life through music, in a way that has never been heard before. To be able to create new arrangements of some of the biggest songs of all time to create a live film score is a creative dream for me."

WINTER A GREAT TIME TO SET READING GOALS FOR THE YEAR

I cannot really remember when I did not love to read books. I do know that I was very eager to learn to read, and that I quickly found myself immersed in the world of books and literature. It may have been a seduction of sorts, and the Christian disciples must always be on guard to guide the eyes to books worthy of a disciple's attention—and there are so many.

As Solomon warned, "Of making many books there is no end" (Ecc 12:12). There is no way to read everything, and not everything deserves to be read. I say that in order to confront the notion that anyone, anywhere, can master all that could be read with profit. I read a great



AL MOHLER

President,
Southern Baptist
Theological
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onpoint

deal, and a large portion of my waking hours are devoted to reading. Devotional reading for spiritual profit is an important part of the day, and that begins with the reading of Scripture. In terms of tim-

■ See **READING** page 22

MOVIES

continued from page 18



two Jesuit priests travel to Japan hoping to find their mentor and spread the Gospel of Christ. Instead, they are met with violence, persecution, and an uncertain future.

Moana

**CURRENT RELEASE DATE:
NOVEMBER 23**

Stars: Auli'i Cravalho, Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, Alan Tudyk

Despite the horde of live-action re-makes Disney has clogging up its schedule, it's nice to see the studio hasn't completely given up on original projects. Moana is Disney's latest addition to their animated royalty. Set in ancient Oceania, the movie follows a young girl named Moana as she seeks to become a famous navigator. Along her journey, she teams up with a legendary fisherman named Maui, who helps her explore the surrounding islands. Will this new princess put an end to Frozen's icy



reign? Probably not, but it looks fun anyway.

Finding Dory
**CURRENT RELEASE DATE:
JUNE 17**

Stars:

Ellen DeGeneres, Albert Brooks, Diane Keaton, Eugene Levy, Ed O'Neill, Ty Burrell, Kaitlin Olson,

Not long ago, a Christian website named Finding Nemo their top Pixar movie of all time. With beautiful animation and a story packed full of emotional moments, it was easy to see how

Finding Nemo wasn't just a good movie, it's the reason we watch movies. It should be no surprise then, that we're anticipating the sequel to Pixar's ocean-spanning masterpiece.

As the name suggests,

Finding Dory will focus on the Royal Tang, Dory, as she searches for her lost family. Pixar has demonstrated before that they can make a sequel which surpasses the original, we can only hope the same holds true here.

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SPRING FILLING UP WITH MUSIC EVENTS

Winter Jam has been plowing through the Kansas City area for a number of years, now, and I've finally decided to go with my family this year; that is, until a student I work with mentioned — over and over, again — how early we would need to get there to get good seats. Not to mention it landed on a Sunday evening, and I would need to get up at 5am to go to work the next morning. Oh,



D.C. JEANES
Metro Voice
music critic

musicscene

well, maybe next year?

Not to worry, dear readers. At least, not if you can wait until April. Capturing “the life transforming ministry of Winter Jam, as you've never seen it before,” THIS IS WINTER JAM is the film presenting live performances from seminal artists including Skillet, for KING & COUNTRY, Francesca Battistelli, Family Force 5, Blanca, Veridia and many more.

It will also offer backstage access, including interviews from Winter Jam past and present artists. THIS IS WINTER JAM also premieres for KING & COUNTRY's brand-new music video “Priceless,” as well as exclusive scenes from their upcoming theatrical film.

THIS IS WINTER JAM will only be shown in theaters on Tuesday, April 19th at 7:00 pm. In the Kansas City area, fans can see the film at Cinemark 20 and XD in Merriam.

In Lawrence, it will be shown at Regal Southwind Stadium 12. This would be a great time for those who have gotten to see Winter Jam live, but especially for fans who haven't been able to make the concert. Tickets are available, currently, online.

Elisabeth Hasselbeck and Matthew West were announced as the hosts of 2016 K-LOVE Fan Awards. Shown live from the Grand Ole Opry House in



Nashville, Tenn on June 5. With a weekly listenership of over 14 million people, K-LOVE is the leading Christian music radio station. The awards are fan-voted Christian music awards in the industry. Fans can vote at KLOVEFanAwards.com to select their

favorite artists, and their votes formulate the official nominees.

There are seven categories, including Artist of the Year, Male Artist of the Year, Female Artist of the Year and more. Fans

■ See MUSIC page 22



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Third Day wins Christian Song of the Year



Christian rock band Third Day has enjoyed a great deal of success since its inception back in 1990. The group has been inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame, sold over 7 million albums, and won numerous Grammy Awards. Now, the gospel band has achieved new heights with their latest song, “Soul on Fire”. Their single “Soul on Fire” being named No. 1 song of the year for 2015 and a 2016 Grammy nomi-

nation.

The band's Mark Lee says that while a lot of band's are formed on just great music, “we are formed on something more solid than that. We all feel called to do this. We feel like God brought us together as friends first — we have always failed back on that. It's such a blessing to be able to continue doing what we are doing.”

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5 ways to alkalize your body

Cleansing is key to good health, and the first step to cleansing is to alkalize the body. Below I'll outline 5 ways to alkalize your body while removing the acidity. Acidosis and toxicity is the root cause of the majority of sickness and disease, so the following guidelines will help with

most any health issue from headaches, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure and more...

1. Start by eating an alkalizing and cleansing type of diet. If you haven't done it already, it is encouraged to mostly, if not completely, eliminate all dairy, grains and meat from your day-to-day

diet. The body cannot cleanse properly and adequately when trying to process these heavier, more acidic foods. These foods create acid waste by-products in the system, even the "healthy" versions such as grass-fed beef, raw milk and whole grain sprouted breads. If you want to prepare your body for deeper levels of cleansing, it is critical that you reduce or eliminate these food categories. To keep it simple, an alkaline diet

means eating mainly fruits and veggies, and lots of green foods (ideally 80% of diet or more). Don't feel like you can live on fruits, veggies and greens? That's ok; olives, avocados, a few almonds, or some plant based protein foods or powders like hemp, pea and spirulina can help you along the day.

2. Drink alkaline water and maybe add a lemon. Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water is extremely important for alkalizing your body. Not just any water will do, you need water filled with minerals. Tap water is actually mildly acidic in most areas with a low pH and traces of chlorine, pesticides, heavy metals and fluoride. We recommend getting a water purifier in your home to use every day. I love the alkaline, negatively ionized water machines. We know that this is not an affordable option for some people, but we highly recommend that you add it to your wish-list and save until you can get one, it's a great investment for your health.

3. Eat cayenne pepper daily! Cayenne isn't just a great spice to add flavor and heat to a meal, Cayenne also has powerful healing properties that have been used for centuries for cleansing, detoxification, to stimulate circulation, and help neutralize acidity. I recommend taking cayenne pepper everyday either in water or food.

4. Baking Soda and water. Baking soda is one of the best alkalizing substances that naturally keeps pH levels in check. If you have problems with heartburn, digestion, your kidneys, or regular UTIs, there is nothing better than taking baking soda every day. To do this, mix 1/2 teaspoon in water right when you wake up and before you go to bed at night and drink on an empty stomach. Many of my clients that have had kidney trouble, low energy levels and poor digestion, have found baking soda to be a miracle worker.

5. Add electrolyte minerals to your water. Electrolyte minerals are the last thing on the list to help alkalize your body, and they are also great for more energy, better hydration, and reduced muscle cramps. There are two simple ways to get electrolytes.

a. Electrolyte Minerals. Find a quality brand of electrolyte mineral drops. It's basically like Gatorade without all the sugar. Electrolyte minerals include calcium, magnesium, potassium and sodium.

b. SOLE Water method. Sole can supply the body with the combined energy of 84 essential ionized minerals. To use, soak Himalayan Crystal Salt Stones in water overnight. In the morning, add 1 teaspoon of the SOLE water to filtered water and drink on an empty stomach. For some, the taste can be difficult to get use to, so I recommend add a little lemon juice to make the salty taste more mild.

Happy Alkalizing!

—Vaughn Lawrence is a natural health care practitioner, herbalist and owner of Spirit of Health who lives by their motto: "We Love God. We Love People. We Love Health. www.spiritofhealthkc.com

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■ 24 TO CHRIST

continued from page 1

oned," Burton explained. "I said, 'Well, I have tried everything but God, what do I have to lose.' I just challenged Jesus — 'If you're real, show me. If you help me, I will serve you and tell the world about you.'"

Knowing that his guilty verdict was due to two prosecution witnesses lying in their testimony and saying that Burton had committed the murder of a St. Louis man, Burton wrote over 700 letters to lawmakers, attorneys and activists who are known for helping free wrongly convicted inmates.

After years of waiting for legal assistance, Centurion Ministries, a New Jersey-based organization dedicated to taking on cases of those wrongly convicted, came to his aid and headed an eight-year legal battle that eventually led a judge to overturn Burton's conviction in 2008 on the grounds that his 1985 trial was constitutionally flawed.

Although he spent over 24 years in prison, Burton, who was led to Christ by various prison ministries and a devout man who hounded him for seven years

to accept Christ, never blamed God for putting him in prison and explained that he saw similarities between his imprisonment and that of Joseph from the Bible.

"I think God used the situation the same way with Joseph when Joseph was thrown in the prison and treated by his brothers in a way that was not right," Burton stated. "What man and human beings made for evil, God used for good." That's the way I look at it. I never blamed God. God didn't throw me in there."

After Burton was released from prison in 2008, it took him a few years before he finally realized that he was called to become a pastor. In a one-year span, Burton said he was asked on two separate occasions whether or not he was interested in becoming a pastor.

"I tried to live without God before in my young life and now when I hear people talk about God, I am going to pay attention now," Burton told CP. "I said, 'Let me learn what pastors do' and

"What man and human beings made for evil, God used for good."

Darryl Burton

I enrolled in seminary. I said, 'I am called to ministry and I better just obey God because not obeying God can really be costly.'"

In 2012, Burton, who never finished high school, began taking classes at Saint Paul School of Theology. And this past December, Burton graduated from the seminary. After his graduation, an associate pastor's job at the Church of Resurrection, a church he had previously interned with, was waiting for him.

"Of course, I wanted to tell the world about God but only God could write up a script like this," Burton said. "I

had no imagination about anything that has happened in my life now."

Burton added that he has a large interest in prison ministry and re-entry ministries for the exonerated and youth.

"My role is just to be a humble servant and do whatever I am asked and whatever I am allowed to do," Burton said. "I just want to speak to the world as I said to Jesus that I would tell the world about Him. Whatever I can do to



just get this message across the globe. Like I said, this church is too small. As [John] Wesley said, 'the world is my parish.'"

Karen Lampe, the executive pastor of congregational care at the Leawood congregation, stated that Burton has been nothing but an "amazing gift to us."

"There's no one who represents himself more humbly than Darryl," Lampe

said. "He just wants to do the very best he can. I think he's trying to make up for lost time."

Although Burton works for one of the area's largest churches, he still believes that the church is not big enough and that there is room for the congregation to grow.

"Christ said to take it to all the nations of the Earth, so we still got work to do," Burton contended.

■ MUSIC

continued from page 20

are invited to place their votes now.

"To all my K-LOVE friends: get ready to praise and party with us because #GodIsGood!" said Hasselbeck recently.

"I'm so excited to be hosting this year's awards along with Elisabeth," West also shared, "this event has become such a wonderful celebration of how God uses Christian music to impact culture through K-LOVE's airwaves every single day, and I'm honored to be part of what is sure to be an unforgettable night."

Pop artist, songwriter and producer Matt Price will be releasing his sophomore EP, *Dream*, Feb. 10. *Dream* has been available for pre-order at iTunes where fans were able to receive an instant download of new track "Fortress" with each purchase prior to release. Price celebrated his new EP, on the evening of release, with a live broadcast via his Periscope channel (mlpmusic) where he performed acoustic versions of new music, answered questions from fans and gave away copies of the album.

"The ideas and themes that you hear on *Dream* were born out of the many triumphs, as well as the deepest struggles of my life over the past couple of years," Price shared. For more information on tours, releases, and what Matt Price has been up to, please visit www.mattpriceonline.com.

Singer/songwriter John Tibbs has released his long-awaited *Dead Man Walking*, the highly anticipated Fair-Trade Services full-length debut. Re-



leased February 5th, this follows the critically acclaimed *Dead Man Walking* EP, and was produced by Ben Shive (Rend Collective, Colony House). "Abraham," a song inspired by God's faithfulness to the Israelites in Exodus; and "Everything I Need," which holds deep personal relation for Tibbs reflecting on his struggle with a lifelong speech impairment.

"The song says, 'Though my weakness ties my tongue, I sing of every good You've done.' It is exhausting to try to hide something. Culture says you have to be perfect and have all the answers, but that isn't a healthy attitude."

For more information, please visit johntibbsmusic.com, fairtradeservices.com or turning-

while the applicant is obtaining services from the agency. In Missouri, you must register by the fourth Wednesday prior to the election. The deadline for the Mar. 8 Missouri election is Feb. 10.

In Kansas, individuals registering for the first time must provide a document proving they are a US citizen, such as birth certificates, passports or naturalization documents. You can register at libraries, banks, grocery stores, and city offices. In Kansas you must be registered 21 days before an

■ READING

continued from page 19

ing, I am somewhat unorthodox. My best time for spending time in the Word is late at night, when all is calm and quiet and I am mentally alert and awake. That is not the case when I first get up in the mornings, when I struggle to find each word on the page.

In the course of any given week, I will read several books. I know how much I thrive on this learning and the intellectual stimulation I get from reading. As my wife and family would be first to tell you, I can read almost anytime, anywhere, under almost any kind of conditions. I have a book with me virtually all the time, and have been known to snatch a few moments for reading at stop lights. No, I do not read while driving (though I must admit that it has been a temptation at times). I took books to high school athletic events when I played in the band. (Heap coals of scorn and nerdiness here). I remember the books; do you remember the games?

A FEW INITIAL SUGGESTIONS:

1. Maintain regular reading projects. I strategize my reading in six main categories: Theology, Biblical Studies, Church Life, History, Cultural Studies, and Literature. I have some project from each of these categories going at all times. I collect and gather books for each project and read them over a determined period of time. This helps to discipline my reading, and it also keeps me working across several disciplines.



2. Work through major sections of Scripture. I am just completing an expository series, preaching verse by verse through the book of Romans. I have preached and taught several books of the Bible in recent years, and I plan my reading to stay ahead. I am turning next to Matthew, so I am gathering and reading ahead—not yet planning specific messages, but reading to gain as much as possible from worthy works on the first gospel. I am constantly reading works in biblical theology as well as exegetical studies.

3. Read all the titles written by some authors. Choose carefully here, but identify some authors whose books demand your attention. Read all they have written and watch their minds at work and their thought in development. No author can complete his thoughts in one book. 4. Get some big sets and read them through. Yes, invest in the works of Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, and others. Set a project for yourself to read through the entire set and give yourself time. You will be surprised how far you will get in less time than you

think.

5. Allow yourself some fun reading, and learn how to enjoy reading by reading enjoyable books. I like books across the fields of literature, but I really love to read historical biographies and historical works in general. In addition, I really enjoy quality fiction and worthy works of literature. As a boy, I probably discovered my love for reading in these categories of books. I allow some time each day, when possible, for such reading. It doesn't have to be much. Stay in touch with the thrill.

6. Write in your books; mark them up and make them yours. Books are to be read and used, not collected and coddled. (Make an exception here for those rare antiquarian books that are treasured for their antiquity. Mark not thy pen on the ancient page, and highlight not upon the manuscript.) Invent your own system or borrow from another, but learn to have a conversation with the book, pen in hand.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com.

■ VOTER REGISTRATION

continued from page 2

a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck, government check or other government document that contains the name and address of the voter. Missouri registration locations include libraries, the office of the local election authority, drivers licensing office (while applying for or renewing a driver's license), or at a designated state agency

the election date.

After you have made sure that you and your family are registered, consider organizing a voter registration drive. A resource, "Voter Resource Guide," produced by the Family Research Council can be found at downloads.frc.org/EF/EF10H62.pdf to assist neighbor and friends to register. Concerned Women for America, Missouri has developed a registration drive resource for churches that is available by contacting Bev Ehlen at

director@missouri.cwfa.org

Abraham Lincoln said, "Elections belong to the people. It is their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters."

Both Missouri and Kansas have resources on line to clarify voting requirements and registration. The first step for many is going to the local library and registering.

SPENCER

continued from page 1

family.

"From the standpoint of the first time ever going on an overseas mission trip, it was very life-changing," Tracy said. "Just everywhere you turn there are kids on the streets, chasing your car, asking for help."

Spencer also was struck by the orphans' inability to obtain an education.

He and Becky knew that Jesus saw these abandoned, orphaned and vulnerable children like lost lambs. "The Good Shepherd's staff is grand enough to care for each one – through His people," Becky said, explaining the ministry name.

The Spencers founded Grand Staff Ministries Inc. (GSM), upon their return from that first trip to Swaziland in 2006. This nonprofit Christian charity started as a sponsorship program for orphaned and vulnerable Swazi children. Since 2006, GSM has provided money for educating 209 Swazi children; 61 children are currently in school, courtesy of sponsors. Five more have pursued post-secondary training in college or trade schools.

When the Spencers first visited Swaziland, 11 percent of homesteads were run by orphaned children, mostly because of the high death rates from AIDS. Just four years later, in 2010, that number had grown to more 20 percent or about 195,000 children without adults in the home.

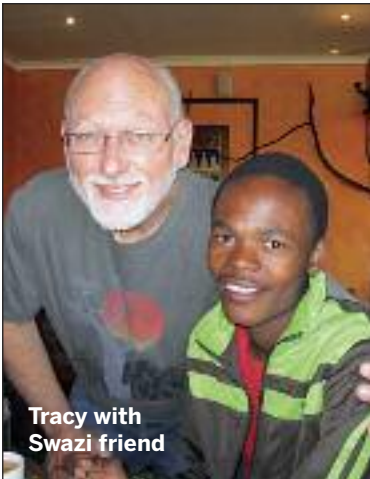
Today, an estimated one-half million people in Swaziland are infected with HIV. Additional untold numbers don't know they're infected because of the stigma associated with the disease. Some people visit Christian medical mobile units after dark to receive anti-retroviral medications to avoid suspicion of their HIV status. Others refuse to be tested and receive life-saving drugs.

Becky, who is an author, speaker and singer/songwriter, supports the Swaziland vision by inviting men and women at Christian conferences, churches, and retreats to sponsor Swazi children at either \$25 or \$50 per month, which pays for students' uniforms, tuition, books, fees and lunches.

The Spencers' residence, a former nursing home built in 1895, was converted to a bed and breakfast within a year of their inaugural trip to Swaziland. The Spencers welcomed their first guests in 2008. Becky and Tracy saw their home transformed into a haven for burned-out pastors, tired Christians, troubled spouses and weary travelers. However, many also have become close friends and partners to the mission work they're doing in Swaziland.

In 2014, GSM began raising funds to build their first orphan home in Swaziland. Last May, they had raised only about 40 percent of the total needed.

Becky and Tracy, right, with their "expanded family" – kids from the orphanage.



Tracy with Swazi friend

Then GSM received a sizable financial pledge from a widow in the United States to help build the orphanage.

Barb Haley is the widow who promised enough cash to complete a 1,540-square-foot building for homeless or abandoned children. Haley, who had received a large insurance settlement after her husband's death, was planning to use a significant amount for a major home renovation until she attended a Christian writer's conference where Spencer talked about GSM and one Swazi girl in particular.

"I decided right then to give every penny of that money to the ministry to help fund this new home," said Haley. "I feel so blessed to know that God is allowing us to be a part in this undertaking. I can honestly say I have nothing but joy when I think of the project ahead."

The girl Becky spoke about was Angel, whose mother abandoned her when she was small. Angel lived with her grandmother until the grandmother died. She was reunited with her mom, but when Angel was in only the third

grade, her mother began locking her out of the home. The Spencers, Angel's pastor and their missionary friends all witnessed changes in her that would indicate this precious little girl was being sexually victimized. Now about 14 years old, Angel reluctantly lives with her mother and other siblings from different fathers, but she frequently runs

benefits are evident in the lives of Swazi men and women who've reversed downward spirals.

Twenty-eight-year-old Swazi Colane Nkambule graduated college in 2015 with a degree in broadcasting and media, thanks to the financial support of his American sponsor, Penny Takeda. A GSM supporter from southern California, Takeda saw Nkambule's promise in secondary school and chose to invest in his life through university training.

Nkambule's success defied the odds stacked against him.

Orphaned and uncared for by immediate relatives, Nkambule lived on the streets of Swaziland's capital city, Mbabane, for five years, stealing food from street vendors. His crime devolved further into alcohol and drugs and probably would have killed him if not for the Christian ministries that helped Nkambule beat his addictions.

Changed dramatically by Jesus and

through relationship with Takeda, who consistently prayed for him, Nkambule gushes with gratitude for GSM, Swazi pastors and U.S. sponsors. He said they provide needy Swazi children the opportunity to live a responsible, honest, productive life.

Nkambule's achievements are incentives, the Spencers say, for them to continue fulfilling the prophetic words and vision for their ministry and Isaiah 58:10, which states God's desire for His people: "Spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your light will become like the noonday."

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