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November 2020

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NEW RESIDENT churchguide



Highland Heights Christian Church

See inside back cover!

Bell Ringers are in short supply



The familiar sound of bell ringing announces the beginning of the season of giving, and the beginning of The Salvation Army's annual Red Kettle Campaign. The Salvation Army is kicking off this year's campaign early due to the pandemic, which is also making it difficult to recruit bell ringers.

Shelley Robertson, the Salvation Army's director of development, said the lack of ringers might be because many volunteers in the past have been older individuals associated with church groups.

"Because they're older and they're more at risk for COVID, I think they're hedging, understandably, to ring, to be out," Robertson said. "This year might be an opportunity for younger people to step up to the plate."

Those wanting to serve as a bell ringer must apply in person at the Topeka Salvation Army headquarters, 1320 S.E. 6th Ave. To apply, you need two forms of ID, and must also pass a background check.

Money collected during the campaign supports local Salvation Army programs throughout the year, such as utility assistance, disaster relief and food programs.

President Trump reveals he is now a 'non-denominational' Christian



President Trump, who has allied himself closely with evangelicals but spoken little of his personal faith, released a new statement of his religious identification.

Having been confirmed into the Presbyterian Church as a child, Donald Trump now says that he identifies as a "non-denominational" Christian.

In an interview with Religion News Service, the President, who is polling strongly with US evangelicals ahead of the election, said he was taught about

"the importance of faith and prayer from a young age" by his parents.

However, having had a long-standing affiliation with the Presbyterian Church, he now prefers to be classed as a non-denominational, along with many of the evangelicals who support him.

"Though I was confirmed at a Presbyterian church as a child, I now consider myself to be a non-denominational Christian," he confirmed in the interview.

Trump went on to say that "Melania

and I have gotten to visit some amazing churches and meet with great faith leaders from around the world. During the unprecedented COVID-19 outbreak, I tuned into several virtual church services and know that millions of Americans did the same."

Trump also reiterated his belief that God was intimately involved in his personal recovery from the virus.

Asked whether he learned anything spiritually from his experience of contracting COVID-19, Trump responded-

■ Please see TRUMP page 2

1/3 of Kansas adults are obese

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) encourages Kansans to adopt active living and healthy eating habits in response to an adult obesity report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The 2019 report shows that more than one-third of Kansas adults ages 18 and older are obese, or 35.2 percent. This is up slightly from 34.4 percent in 2018.

KDHE provides funding and guidance to the Chronic Disease Risk Reduction community grantees that have chosen to address reducing obesity through policy, system and environmental strategies. Projects include adopting and implementing healthy community design principles that support residents in walking or biking places, providing access to healthy foods, and expanding farmer's markets.

"Obesity can put you at risk for health conditions such as heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes. It can also increase your risk of complications if you do have COVID-19," Dr. Lee Norman, KDHE Secretary, said, "As we navigate this pandemic, it's imperative that we all take preventative actions where we can to mitigate this virus' impact. Simple things like taking a walk, going for a bicycle ride, adjusting

■ Please see OBESE page 3

Operation Christmas Child hopes to brighten life for world's children despite pandemic

Topeka has several drop-off locations

Shoebboxes from Operation Christmas Child bring hope to kids who desperately need to feel God's love. But during this time when the coronavirus pandemic is making it difficult to just go to church, it's even harder to get these boxes filled.

"The disruptions related to giving, and maybe even as important to all that, is that even for those churches that have reopened, they're seeing much smaller numbers of people show up," said David Kinnaman, president of Barna. "So simply reopening a church doesn't fix the underlying economic challenges that you might

have."

Samaritan's Purse relies heavily on donations and volunteers to fill the shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child. There are still many ways to safely fill those shoeboxes during the pandemic in time for national collection week: on November 16-23.

Traditional Packing: If you are willing and able, the traditional method of packing a shoebox is still available. You can even use things such as online shopping or curbside pick-up to help reduce the

■ Please see CHRISTMAS CHILD page 3



Congress Helps Topeka Rescue Mission Deliver 2M Meals

by Carolyn Cogswell

Since March of this year the nation has seen the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression of 1929 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, bringing massive increases in unemployment and thousands facing eviction. Two major outcomes of this crisis are hunger and homelessness.

The Topeka Rescue Mission has responded to the consequences of the coronavirus on the economy of Northeastern Kansas. Barry Feaker, director of the TRM, said that as of October 18, the mission has delivered 43,001 food boxes containing 15,726 gallons of milk and 1,187,368 pounds of food which equals 1.97 million



meals.

"Sheltering and feeding people is really taking front and center of everything we do," he said.

World Vision and the Citygate Network, an association of rescue ministries in North America, informed Feaker that Congress has allocated money to help farmers get food into the hands of needy families through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farmers to Families program.

"They provide the food, we find ways to distribute through volunteers," Feaker said.

TRM created Operation Food Secure in April "to help people who are food insecure," Feaker said. Eighty groups consisting of mostly churches in several counties around Topeka are trying to determine who is in need.

You can help by donating both finances and food.

- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Cooked meat
- Milk products

Trucks, vans and station wagons distribute food to people in need in an

operation called Trunk to Table.

Besides food distribution, Operation Food Secure also provides other ministry opportunities. Mission volunteers also pray for people. The Coronavirus has created tremendous pressure, Feaker said, and he does not expect to solve all problems, but the mission is also providing training for churches on how to reach out to people in their communities. In addition, two major players are involved in this effort: The City of Topeka and The United Way.

If you would like to get involved or if you are in need, contact the Topeka Rescue mission at 785-354-1744 or go online to trmonline.org for more information.

"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food? If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:14-17).

his administration's commitment to religious freedom, including sanctioning Cuba and Venezuela "because they don't respect religious freedom," and touting the State Department's Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, held in 2018 and 2019, as "the largest human rights event in history."

Trump also recalled the event on religious freedom he hosted during last September's United Nations General Assembly in New York. "In my speech, I reminded the world's leaders that our rights do not come from government, they come from God — and I explicitly called upon the nations of the world to end religious persecution," he wrote.

"I followed that event with an Executive Order on Advancing International Religious Freedom," he continued, "that solidified America's own commitment to this critical issue, by naming it as a foreign policy priority of the United States and promising that we will respect and vigorously promote this freedom."

First lady Melania Trump revealed she was Catholic in 2017 after meeting with Pope Francis in the Vatican. "Today's visit with His Holiness Pope Francis @Pontifex is one I'll never forget. I was humbled by the honor. Blessings to all," the first lady said after the meeting on social media.

Barron Trump, the youngest child of the first family, was baptized as a child in Palm Beach, Florida, at the Bethesda-by-the-Sea Episcopal church. The 14-year-old Trump attends St. Andrew's Episcopal School, which is located in Potomac, Maryland.

President Trump also made remarks at a recent rally that Jesus Christ is more famous than him, in reply to someone who said that Trump was the most famous person in the world. He also pointed upward and said "We need help from the Boss!"

President Trump has a loyal base among white evangelicals, who in 2016 helped propel him to victory.

That year, the religious group made up roughly a quarter of the electorate, and 81 percent of them voted for Trump, according to a report by The Washington Post.

A recent Lifeway Research poll found that more than half of US protestant pastors (53%) are set to vote for Trump in the November 3 election, which represents a significantly higher level of support in comparison to this point during the 2016 presidential race. Just 1 in 5 (21%) of those surveyed said they will vote for Trump's Democratic rival and former Vice President, Joe Biden, who identifies as a Catholic.



Rush Limbaugh talks about Jesus and 'death sentence'

Talk radio icon Rush Limbaugh gave listeners an update on his cancer Monday saying he was under a "death sentence" but also talked about his personal faith in Jesus Christ.

Limbaugh explained that recent medical scans showed "some progression" of the disease and explained his treatment regimen.

"The scans did show some progression of cancer," Limbaugh told his listeners. "Now, prior to that, the scans had shown that we had rendered the cancer dormant. That's my phrase for it. We had stopped the growth. It had been reduced, and it had become manageable," he said.

"But there's always the reality and the knowledge that that can change and it can come back because it is cancer. It eventually outsmarts pretty much everything you throw at it."

He shared in February he has been diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer. At the time, Limbaugh said he had "zero symptoms."

The 69-year-old shared with his 80 million listeners details about his personal faith in Jesus as well.

"I have a personal relationship with

Jesus Christ," he said. "It is of immense value, strength, confidence. That's why I'm able to remain fully committed to the idea that what is supposed to happen will happen when it's meant to."

Limbaugh also thanked those who have extended their prayers and well wishes, calling their support "a series of blessings."

"We all know that we're going to die at some point, but when you have a terminal disease diagnosis that has a time frame to it, then that puts a different psychological and even physical awareness to it," he said.

And despite the physical toll caused by his disease, Limbaugh said he's grateful to still be able to continue his work.

"I feel very blessed to be here speaking with you today. Some days are harder than others. I do get fatigued now. I do get very, very tired now. I'm not gonna mislead you about that," said Limbaugh.

"But I am extremely grateful to be able to come here to the studio and to maintain as much normalcy as possible — and it's still true," he said.

Limbaugh, has talked more about his faith this year as callers have expressed their heartfelt efforts to pray for him.

OBESE

continued from page 1

our diet can make a big difference in our overall health."

Kansans can also do the following to improve their health:

- Get adequate sleep
- Drink more water
- Eat more vegetables
- Find healthy ways to cope with stress
- Get outdoors while the weather is still good!
- Use fitness apps or videos

"Addressing obesity requires both personal and community action," Dr. Norman said. "It takes all of us working together to make a difference."

More information on specific initiatives can be found at www.kdheks.gov/bhp/pan/index.htm.

TRUMP

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ed that he and Melania "felt the prayers of Americans from all across the country — and even around the world" when he was recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

"I said, 'There were miracles coming down from heaven.' I meant it," he said. "Melania and I are very thankful to God for looking out for our family and returning us to good health."

Trump praised the faith of his influential evangelical supporters, and said Franklin Graham, president and CEO of his father Billy's evangelistic organization and of the relief organization Samaritan's Purse, had visited the Oval Office to pray for him earlier this month.

"These amazing people love the U.S.A. and have a genuine desire to work together for the betterment of all Americans," Trump said. "I appreciate their prayers and am encouraged by their great faith."

Trump pointed to his administration's successful negotiation two years ago to return American pastor Andrew Brunson to the U.S. after he was imprisoned in Turkey.

The president then gave a wide-ranging account of what he said was

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Trump unveils economic plan to provide opportunities for black communities



President Donald Trump is expanding his 4-year effort to help black Americans prosper. The Black Economic Empowerment Platinum Plan commits \$500 billion to inner-city areas. It is a follow-up to policies instituted by the administration that resulted in rising wages, a record number of blacks entering the middle class and the lowest unemployment for African Americans in history.

"I'm here today to announce a brand-new plan to deliver more opportunity, more security, more fairness and more prosperity to black communities,"

Trump said "We call it the Platinum Plan and that's a contract with black Americans and it's going to be something that people talk about for a long time to come."

Georgia small-business owner Bruce LeVell, who also heads the president's National Diversity Coalition, says he was overcome with emotion as he heard details of the plan. "I was just choked up because never in my life have I seen a president — like this is real stuff here," he said. "This is real meat."

The president's plan comes at a time when America's wealth gap between whites and blacks remains substantial. According to a report by the Federal Reserve, in 2019, the typical white family had an approximate net worth of \$188,200, compared to \$24,100 for black families.

If re-elected, President Trump promises that over the next four years his administration will improve those num-

bers by creating three million jobs for the black community, 500,000 thousand black-owned businesses. He also commits to increasing homeownership opportunities for African Americans, providing access to better education and higher policing standards.

"This is a tremendous, tremendous boost for, as I say, the underserved communities across this great nation," LeVell said. "This is a great, great way to spur growth in a lot of our communities that's been honestly left behind."

LeVell believes it is time for blacks to seriously consider what Trump has to offer.

"Take a look around you and ask yourself do you like your roads, do you like your schools, do you like everything around you?" he asked. "If your answer's no, then let's try it this way. Don't get caught up in the emotions, pay attention to the numbers."

C5 Luncheon to be held at National Guard Museum

The November C5 POWER Luncheon will be held November 14, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the National Guard Museum at Forbes Field. The event is open to the public, and military chaplain John Potter will be the featured speaker.

The cost to attend a C5 luncheon is \$10 for C5Alive members and first-time guests who RSVP, and \$12 at the door. Non-members and other guests pay \$15. C5 luncheons are open to the public and everyone is welcome to attend, organizers said. RSVPs and inquiries can be sent to info@C5Alive.org.

The next monthly C5Alive "POWER Luncheon" will be held at Fairlawn Plaza Mall, featuring Christmas music and fun activities.

C5Alive "POWER" luncheons are held on the second Thursday of each month, and meals are catered by Aboud's/Engroff's or

other fine caterers.

For more details on these and other events, stay tuned to the C5Alive facebook page and website: www.C5Alive.org.

C5Alive is an organization founded in 2009, dedicated to developing and uniting Christian Leadership in the community, involving businesses, non-profits and churches.

In addition to monthly "POWER" luncheons held on the second Thursday of each month, C5 also hosts periodic business fairs and other events, including EASTERFEST, the annual Topeka Easter Parade and Family Fun Fest, held on N. Kansas Avenue and in Garfield Park on the day before Easter.

C5 members may also sponsor luncheons and other events as a way to promote their organizations. For more information about C5, go to C5Alive.org, [facebook.com/C5Alive](https://www.facebook.com/C5Alive), or call 785-640-6399.



Potter

CHRISTMAS CHILD

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time spent at stores. But if you do leave your home to shop for your shoebox, just be sure to follow proper social-distancing guidelines. You can either drop your shoebox off at a participating church or drop-off location.

Virtual Packing: You now can pack a shoebox online. A few clicks will allow you to select toys and other fun items for your box, as well as include a letter and photo to delight the heart of a child. You'll even be able to follow your box to see where in the world it ends up.

Donating: Is packing a shoebox not your thing? No worries. One of the simplest ways to help is by making a donation.

Topeka families, churches and groups will be busy the next few weeks transforming empty shoeboxes into fun gifts filled with toys, school supplies and hygiene items. The Samaritan's Purse project partners with local churches across the globe to deliver these tangible expressions of God's love to children in need. For many of these children, it will be the first gift they have ever received. "I love seeing the local community rally together for a global impact," said area volunteer Sabrina Scheerer, who has participated in Operation Christmas Child for 10 years. "We see all ages getting involved."

"In the midst of the pandemic, the needs are greater than ever before," said Franklin Graham, president of Samaritan's Purse. "Children around the world need to know that God loves them and there is hope. A simple shoebox gift opens the door to share about the true hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ."

Participants can find the nearest drop-off location and hours of operation as they make plans to drop off their shoebox gifts. The online lookup tool is searchable by City or ZIP code. Signs at each location will identify the curbside drop off.

For more information, visit www.samaritanaspurse.org.

TOPEKA AREA COLLECTION SITES:

First Southern Baptist Church, 1930 SW Gage Blvd, Topeka:

Monday, Nov. 16, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 19, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 21, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 22, 2 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 23, 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.

Northland Christian Church, 3102 NW Topeka Blvd, Topeka:

Monday, Nov. 16, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 19, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 21, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 22, 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 23, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

First Baptist Church, 301 E Railroad St, Silver Lake:

Monday, Nov. 16, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.; 2 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 19, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20, 2 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 21, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 22, 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 23, 8 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Auburn Christian Church, 1351 N Washington, Auburn:

Monday, Nov. 16, 2 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 19, 2 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20, 2 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 21, 10 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 22, 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 23, 9:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

First Baptist Church, 404 Juniper Dr, Holton:

Monday, Nov. 18, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 19, 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 20, 12 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 21, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 22, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 23, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 24, 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 25, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Cross Road Community Church, 512 S Mason St, Scranton:

Monday, Nov. 16, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 19, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 21, 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 22, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 23, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

First Christian Church, 404 Juniper, Holton:

Monday, Nov. 16, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 17, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 18, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Thursday, Nov. 19, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Friday, Nov. 20, 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 21, 9 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Sunday, Nov. 22, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 23, 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

First Christian Church, 1000 Kentucky St, Lawrence:

Mon, Nov. 16: 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Tue, Nov. 17: 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Wed, Nov. 18: 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Thu, Nov. 19: 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Fri, Nov. 20: 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Sat, Nov. 21: 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Sun, Nov. 22: 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Mon, Nov. 23: 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

Those interested in more information on how Operation Christmas Child is making adjustments during its National Collection Week can visit the organization's Important COVID-19 Updates webpage for the latest information and answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

Operation Christmas Child, a project of Samaritan's Purse, seeks to demonstrate God's love in a tangible way to children in need around the world and, together with the local church worldwide, to share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 178 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children in more than 160 countries and territories.



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Kansas News Briefs from around the state

Coaches, Athletes Across the Nation Mourn Loss of Legendary Kansas Coach

LAWRENCE, Kan. (KPR) - Coaches and athletes across the country are remembering Dick Foster, who won national championships at both Fort Scott Community College and Coffeyville Community College. Foster died last week at his home in Lawrence. He was 86. According to the Montgomery County Chronicle(link is external), Foster is one of only two coaches in community college history to win national titles at two schools. Foster's career winning record of more than 87% over the span of 16 years put him in the highest echelon of coaches at all levels of college football. Among his career highlights was coaching future Heisman Trophy winner Mike Rozier. He also coached 30 future NFL players, as well as 47 NJCAA All-Americans. Foster also served as an assistant football coach at both the University of Kansas and Oklahoma University. Private family funeral services for Dick Foster will be held Saturday in Lawrence.

Kansas Man Gets Life Sentences for Killing Pregnant Woman

JUNCTION CITY, Kan. (AP) — A Kansas man has been sentenced to two life sentences for the killing of a pregnant Kansas mother who was found dead on Christmas Day in 2018. Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt says 35-year-old Dion Jamal Green was sentenced Wednesday to two consecutive life terms with no possibility of parole for the December 2018 deaths of 31-year-old Jenna Schafer, of Junction City, and her unborn child. Early in the case, prosecutors had said Green was hired to kill Schafer, who was found dead in a Junction City apartment on Christmas Day 2018. But a second man arrested in the case and accused of hiring Green, later had charges against him dropped.

60 People Charged in \$300 Million Phone Scam Targeting Elderly Victims

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - Sixty people have been charged in a widespread magazine telemarketing scam that authorities say netted \$300 million from more than

150,000 elderly and vulnerable people nationwide. Minnesota's U.S. Attorney, Erica MacDonald, announced the charges Wednesday, calling it the largest elder fraud scheme in the country. The defendants are from 14 states and two Canadian provinces. Prosecutors say that during the last 20 years, the defendants used a network of fake magazine sales companies and telemarketing call centers to trick people into making large or repeat payments. Prosecutors say the companies operated in Kansas, Missouri, Colorado, Minnesota and 10 other states (Iowa, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, California, Illinois, Arizona, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Arkansas.)

Kansas Predicts Record Number of Voters Casting Ballots

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) - Kansas election officials predict the state will see record-setting turnout for this year's presidential election. The Kansas Secretary of State's office said it anticipates 70% of Kansas voters will participate in the election. It anticipates that about 1.35 million Kansans will cast a ballot. While the 70% figure itself is not a record, every number behind it is. Kansas has about 1.94 million registered voters, almost 100,000 more than in 2018. Their projection is based partly on record-setting turnout so far. As of today (THUR), 346,489 advance-by-mail ballots have been returned to local election offices and nearly 221,000 voters have already cast ballots in-person.

Man Charged in Death of Woman Found in Ninesciah River

UNDATED (AP) - A Wichita man is charged with first-degree murder in the death of a woman whose body was found in a river earlier this year. Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt announced the charges against 48-year-old Robert Bruce Mans Jr. in the death of 27-year-old Shalan Niccole Gannon, also of Wichita. Mans was charged Wednesday and arrested in Wichita today (THUR). Shalan Gannon was reported missing on April 11, and her body was found in June in the Ninesciah River in rural Sumner County. Authorities did not release any other information, including how she died or how Mans was connected to her death.

Mother of Slain Boys Expresses Thanks, Asks for Privacy

LEAVENWORTH, Kan. (AP) - A Kansas mother whose estranged husband is charged with killing the couple's two sons before fleeing with their two daughters is thanking the people who helped track down the girls nearly 400 miles away in Oklahoma. Tara Jackson's attorney, Gary Nelson, described the deaths of 14-year-old Logan Jackson and 12-year-old Austin Jackson as "traumatic" in a statement released Wednesday and said the mother is asking for privacy for the family. The boys' younger sisters, 3-year-old Aven Jackson and 7-year-old Nora Jackson, were found unharmed near Erick, Oklahoma, on Saturday night after a massive search. A trucker spotted the father and the two girls on Interstate 40 west of Oklahoma City and alerted authorities. The father of the four children, 40-year-old Donny Jackson Jr., has been charged with premeditated capital murder in the killing of his two sons. He is jailed in Oklahoma while awaiting extradition to Kansas.

Lyons Man Charged in Shooting of Police Officer, Teacher

LYONS, Kan. (AP) — A Kansas man

accused of shooting a police officer and a high school teacher has been charged with attempted capital murder. Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt says 40-year-old Adam Hrabik, of Lyons, was charged in the October 19 shooting of Lyons police Sergeant Cory Ryan, who suffered serious injuries. He was also charged with aggravated assault after high school teacher Brian Friess was caught in the crossfire and seriously injured. The suspect ran into a home after the shooting and was arrested after a long standoff with police.

Man Charged with Mayor Threat Had Been Texting Wichita City Councilman

WICHITA, Kan. (AP) — Court documents say a retired firefighter who is charged with threatening to kidnap and kill the mayor of Wichita because he was upset about the city's mask ordinance had been texting an acquaintance on the city council for more than a month before his arrest. The Wichita Eagle reports that t 59-

year-old Meredith Dowty was charged with three counts of criminal threat. The documents say Wichita City Council member James Clendenin started receiving texts from Dowty on September 9. But he said he didn't feel the conversation went beyond "venting" until October 16, when Dowty allegedly wrote that the "Mayor and all those who bankrupt us" are "viable targets for elimination."

Sporting KC Earns Playoff Berth, Beating FC Cincinnati 1-0

CINCINNATI (AP) — Roger Espinoza scored and Sporting Kansas City clinched a playoff berth with a 1-0 victory over FC Cincinnati on Wednesday night. Sporting Kansas City also moved into the Western Conference lead. Cincinnati lost its third straight match and was eliminated from playoff contention. Espinoza's shot from close range deflected off goalkeeper Spencer Richey's left foot in the 57th minute.

—kansapublicradio.org

Tips to help taxpayers avoid post-disaster scams

By Peggy Beasterfield
Owner, Peggy's Tax and Accounting Service

The IRS reminds taxpayers that criminals and scammers often try to take advantage of generous taxpayers who want to help disaster victims. Everyone should be vigilant. These scams often pop up after a hurricane, wildfire or other disaster.

How the scams start

These disaster scams normally start with unsolicited contact. The scammer contacts their possible victim by telephone, social media, email or in-person. Scammers also use a variety of tactics to lure information out of people.

Here are some tips to help people recognize a scam and avoid becoming a victim:

- Some thieves pretend they are from a charity. They do this to get money or private information from well-intentioned taxpayers.

- Bogus websites use names that are similar to legitimate charities. They do this scam to trick people to send money or provide personal financial information.

- Scammers even claim to be working for — or on behalf of — the IRS. The thieves say they can help victims file casualty loss claims and get tax refunds.

- Disaster victims can call the IRS toll-free disaster assistance line at 866-562-5227. Phone assistants will answer questions about tax relief or disaster-related tax issues.


- Taxpayers who want to make donations can get information to help them on IRS.gov. The Tax Exempt Organization Search helps users find or verify qualified charities. Donations to these charities may be tax-deductible.


- Taxpayers should always contribute by check or credit card to have a record of the tax-deductible donation.

- Donors should not give out personal financial information to anyone who solicits a contribution. This includes things like Social Security numbers or credit card and bank account numbers and passwords.



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But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness
like an everflowing stream. - Amos 5:24



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FINANCIAL PLANNING

Generous Offer

Dear Dave,

My in-laws have very generously offered my wife and I \$250,000 to help with a down payment on a home. I know the amount exceeds the IRS's yearly gift allowance, but they want to structure it as a family loan and have already told us they don't care if we pay it back. If we accept, we technically owe them a lot of money. If we say no, they may be offended. What do you think about this and how it might impact the relationship?

James

Dear James,

Well, it makes sense your wife would be onboard with the whole thing. It's her dad making the offer, so of course she would be a lot more comfortable with the idea than you are.

This is a big deal, and it's something you two should have a very serious conversation about. Get on the same page in every regard. Also, I'd recommend making sure you get everything in writing. See to it, as well, that it can be forgiven at the maximum allowable annual gift rate.

In addition, in the event of death make sure it's included in the estate, it's forgiven, and there will be zero call on the note. In effect,



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Financial author,
radio host, television
personality, and
motivational speaker

davesays

that would make it an advance on your inheritance instead of debt. Under no circumstances should they, or any other heirs, have grounds to call the note.

That's a good question, James. And a nice gift!

—Dave

Might be money well spent...at the proper time

Dear Dave,

My wife and I are on Baby Step 2 of your plan. About eight months ago she gave birth to our second child, and now she would like to have a mommy makeover. I want her to be comfortable and feel good about herself, but those procedures can be really expensive. I don't know how to fit that in with trying to pay off debt and get control of our money. What do you think?

Greg

Dear Greg,

Basically, this kind of cosmetic surgery isn't an emergency. It's a desire. It can, in many cases, be a valid and reasonable desire. But if you guys are serious about getting out of debt and gaining control of your finances, I'd advise waiting until after Baby Step 3 to make this happen. At that point, you'll have paid off all your debt—except for your home—and you'll have a fully

funded emergency fund of three to six months of expenses in the bank.

Going on vacation isn't a need, it's a want. Buying a new couch isn't a need, it's a want. I know you love your wife, and you want her to be happy and feel good about herself. But right now, this is a want. If it were a medical procedure required to save her life, it would be an emergency—a need. In a case like that, you'd stop what you're doing right now and address the issue.

This may be something you both agree is a valid expense. If it's

something you've talked through together, and something you both want, that's fine. It's a reasonable goal under the circumstances. But I would wait until after you're out of debt and you have your emergency fund in place. Being out of debt will make it so much easier to save up and take care of any out-of-pocket expenses you might have to pay.

All in all, it's money well spent to help your wife look and feel like herself again. Just do it at the proper time where your finances are concerned!

—Dave

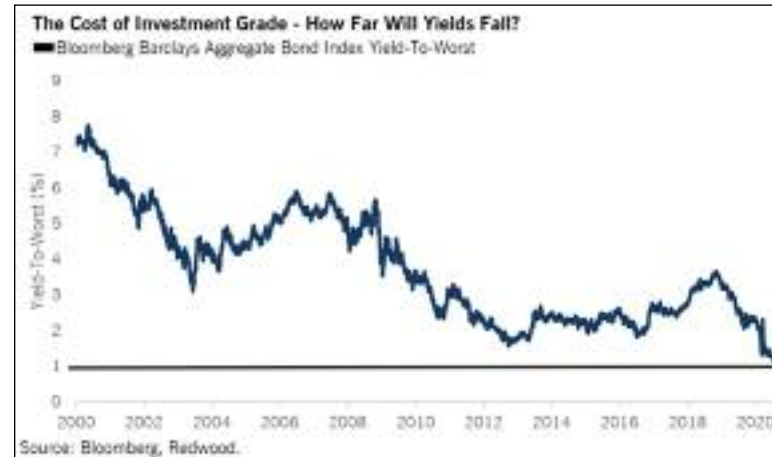
How Low Can Rates Go?

By Ryan Shumaker
Smartvestor Pro at
The Retirement Team



Looking back to the start of the century, interest rates have been in decline. Back then the Aggregate Bond Index was paying over 7%. Today? Just 1%. This means in order for

at something called 'average effective duration.' This is a measurement of how much the bonds will gain or lose when interest rates go up or down. Right now for the Aggregate Bond Index that number is about 6.5. What this means is that if interest rates rise just 1%, then the bonds will lose 6.5%. If interest rates go up 2%, then the bonds would lose a whopping 13%. Given that the bonds



investors to get the same amount of interest from their bonds or bond funds they need a staggering 7 times as much money.

Bonds have been a great place to make decent money with lower levels of risk, especially 10-20 years ago. Why? Because not only were bonds paying a much higher interest rate then, but bonds also gain in value when interest rates fall. Things are much different today. Interest rates are at their lowest level in history, without much more room to go lower. If interest rates merely stay where they are, then investors are going to get an interest rate that is only 1/3 of what historical inflation has been. This means that every single day a person would be losing buying power with their money since their investment would be growing 3 times slower than what prices (inflation) are rising.

Things get much worse when interest rates rise. When that happens bonds lose value. Let me give an example. Let's say you go and buy a bond from a school that cost \$100 and is paying 1%. Now let's say interest rates go up to 2%. If someone can go buy a new bond from the school that is paying 2% for \$100 no one is going to want to give you \$100 for the one paying 1% that you own. You're going to have to take less. This is why when interest rates rise, bonds lose value.

The big question is 'how much do they lose?' To find that out with any bond index of bond fund you must look

are only paying 1% in interest right now we believe this is a pretty big risk to be taking for such a little amount of investment return.

We are concerned that with interest rates plummeting the last two years (which you can see in the chart) and bond funds gaining value because of this that too many people are being lured into a false sense of security with inappropriate expectations for how most bond index funds should perform. The unfortunate thing is that with this index the 'average effective duration' was actually SMALLER when interest rates have been going down the last 2 years than what it is now. This means that if interest rates merely go back to where they were at the start of last year that investors will lose more as rates go back up than what they gained when rates went down.

3 things can happen with interest rates right now. They can go down more, but there's not too much further they can fall when they're already at 1%. They could stay the same, which would mean those invested in them would earn 3 times less than inflation, or they could go up causing losses that are likely more than what the interest the bonds are paying.

If you own any bond funds, we believe it is very important to know what risks are being taken. The largest bond fund in the world right now follows the exact index we're talking about in this article. If you have a mutual fund

or ETF with 'total bond market' or 'aggregate bond market' in its name, it likely follows this popular bond market index. Many 'target date retirement funds' have a bond fund like this as their single largest holding. While that may have worked very well 20 years ago, it is mathematically impossible for that to continue to work as well today. We have never been in an interest rate or investing environment like we are in today. It is much more difficult to get a good return on conservative investments. In our opinion, it is important to seek out ones that instead of losing when interest rates go up will actually gain and pay higher interest when that happens. There are numerous investments out there that have this feature, but unfortunately many don't know where to look or don't have the expertise to select them.

As part of our firm's complimentary 3 step review, we help people find ways to get reliable income that isn't going to be hit when interest rates inevitably rise. We also find as much money as we can that is needless falling through the cracks to things like taxes. Every dollar saved on taxes is 1 less dollar of interest needed to get the same amount of income in retirement. Now more than ever it is important to get all of the other little things correct when it comes to retirement as the margin for error is so much smaller. With interest rates being more than 7 times less for people retiring today than what their parents would've experienced 20 years ago what worked well for them is unlikely to work well for someone retiring today.

Material discussed is meant for general/informational purposes and is not intended to be used as the sole basis for any financial decisions, nor be construed as advice to meet your particular needs. Please consult a financial professional for further information. The Dow Jones Industrial Average cannot be invested in directly. Investing in securities involves risk and profit cannot be guaranteed.

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opinion

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metro VOICE

MANAGING EDITOR



Lee Hartman
LHartman3@cox.net

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Nick Hartman
Dwight Widaman

ADVERTISING CONSULTANTS

Lee Hartman
785-640-6399; Voice@cox.net

Darcy Childs 785-249-6203
childs.darcy@gmail.com

NEWS & FEATURES

Amy Buster, Carolyn Cogswell, Rob Mooney, Marie Asner, Alan Goforth, Clint Decker, Michael Foust, John Altevogt, Dwight Widaman, Lee Hartman

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Joe Boothe, Lee Hartman, Dwight Widaman

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CONTACT INFO

Offices: 2611 SW 17th St.
Correspondence & Payments:
P.O. Box 5724, Topeka, KS 66605
Phone/Fax: 785-235-3340
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Racial Disparities and Football

One argument used to prove systemic racism is the extent of racial disparities. On the Internet you will find lots of charts that show differences between black and white that are then used to prove racism.

One way to respond to those charges is to look at one of the last columns ever written by black economist Thomas Sowell with the provocative title "Football and Fallacies." He talks about the reaction from the players in the NFL when a black punter took the field. One of the defenders cried out, "Fake!" His reaction was understandable since you never see a black kicker in the NFL.

Thomas Sowell put it this way: "I have seen hundreds of black players score touchdowns, but not

one kick the point afterwards. I have seen a black President of the United States before I have seen a black kicker in the NFL."

He is obviously questioning the assumption that statistical differences between racial groups indicate discrimination. Does that mean there is discrimination among kickers in professional football? Not at all. We all know the answer to that question. Owners and coaches will pick the best player regardless of their ethnic background. In fact, they will even take foreign players who cannot speak English if they can kick a football.

The lesson here is that we have been told for decades that statisti-



cal differences are automatically a reason to suspect discrimination, whether between races or sexes. He goes on to remind us that some of the differences in wages between men and women have more to do with different career choices.

Let's be honest. Some statistical

differences do point to discrimination (either overt or subtle), but in most cases the differences are due to other factors that have nothing to do with discrimination. This is a lesson we can all learn, from this football story.

—Kerby Anderson

HOW TO BE THANKFUL IN CHAOS



CLINT DECKER

President and Evangelist with Great Awakenings, Inc.

hopefortoday

The year 2020 will go down as probably one of the most cultural shaping years of the United States and world in recent times. It began in January with retired NBA legend, Kobe Bryant's sudden death. News of his passing impacted the globe. In February, President Donald Trump became the third President to be impeached by the U.S. House of Representatives. In March the Covid-19 pandemic swept across the world including all 50 states in America, shutting down almost the entire country. In May, the killing of George Floyd set off a series of lawless riots in major cities. In June the Supreme Court ruled that the 1964 Civil Rights Act can be extended to offer controversial protections to lesbian, gay, transgender and bi-sexual people, which will have massive implications for churches and Christian run non-profits, businesses and schools. And through all this upheaval a tense and divisive political campaign season and presidential election. Plus, we still have December to go and none of this includes what has been happening in your own life and family.

Anyone, no matter where they stand politically or religiously, can

agree that 2020 has been incredibly stressful due to so many significant and difficult events. Thanksgiving Day is significant this year. Let me ask you this, "How can we be thankful while in the midst of all this craziness?"

Read this carefully . . . the evidence of true and genuine thankfulness comes not in a season of plenty, but in a time of loss and heartache. For that is when you look beyond the superficial and into the depths of what is truly important. Pain has a sobering effect on us, often waking us up to questions that help us come to terms with life's greatest priorities.

In the Bible it is written, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). The man who wrote those words penned them while imprisoned unjustly for doing good to others.

The people in our nation's history that gave us the origins of Thanksgiving Day, understood this concept of true thanksgiving. November 11, 1620, European Pilgrims, America's new settlers, arrived on the shores of what eventually became Massachusetts. According to an American history website, wallbuilders.com . . .

The harsh New England winter was already well underway. Having no homes or shelter of any kind when they landed, before spring arrived, half of the 100 settlers had died. But that first year also brought unexpected blessings as some of the Indians in the area who had learned English were willing to help the Pilgrims by showing them many things they needed to survive, including how to plant Indian crops



such as corn, and how to hunt and fish in that area.

Out of this great blessing that the native Americans showed the Pilgrims, came America's first Thanksgiving. While each of the Pilgrims had experienced awful tragedy, they were able to lift their eyes heavenward and truly give thanks and praise to the Lord God, whom they worshipped, for the grace He showed them through friendship with the Indians. They were able to find good in the face of pain and sorrow.

Where is the good in America right now? Like the Pilgrims, lift your eyes heavenward to the Lord God. Look beyond what you see physically to the unseen presence of a very real and holy God. Long ago He sent His only Son, Jesus, who came to die and rise again for the sins of the world. For sin is the cause of all that troubles our lives and world. Our disobedience to God and the disobedience of others, has brought much evil and destruction upon us. Yet, we

are not left to ourselves. In Jesus, God has given us hope. We can be set free from our shackles of sin. The weight can be lifted. The darkness can be turned to light. The chaos can be transformed into peace. It is because of Jesus we can give thanks while the world falls apart around us. Let not circumstances determine if there is something to be thankful for. Turn to Christ. Let Him change your heart, then see the world and your life like you have never seen it before.

A prayer for you - "Lord God, I pray for the one who is troubled by all he or she is walking through. Open their eyes and heart to see you standing right there in the middle of the chaos. Let them see you as a Savior. Bring them to turn from their disobedience and seek you for forgiveness. In your holy name, Amen."

Clint Decker is President of Great Awakenings. Hope for Today is a nationally syndicated column.

If God used one of Clint's columns to impact your life, share your story at cdecker@greatawakenings.org.

Study: Third of Covid-19 deaths cannot be attributed to the disease

The Washington Examiner is reporting on a new study that has discovered that a third of U.S. COVID-19 deaths could not be directly attributed to the coronavirus. The data was obtained through several sources including the CDC.

“Although total US death counts are remarkably consistent from year to year, US deaths increased by 20% during March-July 2020. COVID-19 was a documented cause of only 67% of these excess deaths,” the study, published on the Journal of the American Medical Association’s website, said. “Some states had greater difficulty than others in containing community spread, causing protracted elevations in excess deaths that extended into the summer.”

The paper reports that lockdowns were one reason for excess deaths not attributed to Covid.

“Excess deaths attributed to causes other than COVID-19 could reflect deaths from unrecognized or undocumented infection with severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 or deaths among uninfected patients resulting from disruptions produced by the pandemic,” the study’s authors noted.

The news organization goes on:

The American Medical Association study, which has yet to be peer-reviewed, found that between March and August, the U.S. recorded 1,336,561 deaths, a “20% increase over expected deaths.” It noted that “of the 225,530 excess deaths, 150,541 (67%) were attributed to COVID-19.”

Deaths from heart disease and Alzheimer’s disease and dementia saw statistically significant increases, the study noted.

Those results largely echo those of a September Washington Post analysis of excess dementia deaths:

“Beyond the staggering U.S. deaths caused directly by the novel coronavirus, more than 134,200 people have died from Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia since March. That is 13,200 more U.S. deaths caused by dementia than expected, compared with previous years.”

“Overlooked amid America’s war against the coronavirus is this reality: People with dementia are dying not just from the virus but from the very strategy of isolation that’s supposed to protect them.

In recent months, doctors have reported increased falls, pulmonary infections, depression and sudden frailty in patients who had been stable for years.”

According to the AMA study,



much of the country’s excess deaths can be attributed to just a few states.

“The 10 states with the highest per capita rate of excess deaths were New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Arizona, Mississippi, Maryland, Delaware, Rhode Island, and Michigan,” the study said.

“The increase in absolute deaths in these states relative to expected values ranged from 22% in Rhode Island and Michigan to 65% in New York,” the study continued. “Three states with the highest death rates (New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts) accounted for 30% of US excess deaths but had the shortest epidemic.”

The authors noted the study has limitations, including a “reliance on provisional data” and “inaccuracies in death certificates.”

Concerns over the health implications of lockdowns have grown in recent months. Joel Zinberg, a practicing surgeon at Mount Sinai Hospital and an associate clinical professor of surgery at the Icahn School of Medicine, noted in July that excess deaths due to causes outside of the coronavirus could be one of the unintended consequences of government responses to the pandemic.

The paper continues:

“Deaths from chronic, non-emergent conditions also increased as patients put off maintenance visits and their medical conditions deteriorated,” Zinberg said. “Five states with the most Covid-19 deaths from March through April (Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania), experienced large proportional increases in deaths from non-respiratory underlying causes, including diabetes (96 percent), heart diseases (89 percent), Alzheimer’s disease (64 percent), and cerebrovascular diseases (35 percent). New York City—the nation’s Covid-19 epicenter during that period—experienced the largest increases in non-respiratory deaths, notably from heart disease (398 percent) and diabetes (356 percent).”

“Cancer diagnoses were delayed for months as patients were unable to obtain ‘elective; screening procedures,” he continued. “For some, this will result in more advanced disease. Diagnosed cancer cases—normally treated with surgery or inpatient medical treatments—were treated with outpatient treatments instead. While some oncologists rationalized that the results might be just as good, physicians were clearly deviating from the standard of care.”

Zinberg also shed light on how the economic downturn brought on by lockdowns is affecting the health of the public.

“The lockdowns led to wide unemployment and economic recession, resulting in increased drug and alcohol abuse and increases in domestic abuse and suicides. Most studies in a systematic literature review found a positive association between economic recession and increased suicides,” Zinberg said. “Ten times as many people texted a federal government disaster mental-distress hotline in April 2020 as in April 2019.”

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the leading White House infectious disease expert, has also expressed opposition to new lockdown efforts.

He warned against calls for a national lockdown in an interview set to be released Sunday, saying the pandemic would have to get “really, really bad” before he would support the measure. He also noted that the country is “fatigued with restrictions.”

Fauci’s comments have been consistent with the views of President Donald Trump who has repeatedly said the economy can be safely reopened.

“So we want to use public health measures, not to get in the way of opening the economy, but to being a safe gateway to opening the economy,” Fauci said. “So instead of having an opposition: Open up the economy [to] get jobs back, or shut down. No. Put ‘shut down,’ away and say, ‘We’re going to use public health measures to help us safely get to where we want to go.”

WHO urges halt to lockdowns worldwide



Stop using lockdowns to control the pandemic. That’s what the World Health Organization is now urging political leaders around the globe

“We in the World Health Organization do not advocate lockdowns as the primary means of control of this virus,” WHO Special Envoy David Nabarro told The Spectator in an interview aired on Oct. 8. “The only time we believe a lockdown is justified is to buy you time to reorganize, regroup, rebalance your resources, protect your health workers who are exhausted, but by and large, we’d rather not do it.”

Nabarro said that poorer populations are being harmed the most around the world as one of the victims, not of the virus, but of government ordered lockdowns.

“Just look at what’s happened to the tourism industry, for example in the Caribbean or in the Pacific, because people aren’t taking their holidays. Look what’s happened to smallholder farmers all over the world because their markets have got dented. Look what’s happening to poverty levels. It seems that we may well have a doubling of world poverty by next year. Seems that we may well have at least a doubling of child malnutrition because children are not getting meals at school and their parents, in poor families, are not able to afford it,” Nabarro said.

“This is a terrible, ghastly global catastrophe, actually,” he said. “And so we really do appeal to all world leaders: Stop using lockdown as your primary control method, develop better systems for doing it, work together and learn from each other, but remember—lockdowns just have one consequence that you must never ever belittle, and that is making poor people an awful lot poorer.

Nabarro isn’t the only scientist opposing lockdowns. A large num-

ber of medical and public health scientists and medical practitioners have signed the Great Barrington Declaration, which states that “current lockdown policies are producing devastating effects on short and long-term public health.”

The signatories include: “Dr. Martin Kulldorff, professor of medicine at Harvard University, a biostatistician, and epidemiologist with expertise in detecting and monitoring of infectious disease outbreaks and vaccine safety evaluations; Dr. Sunetra Gupta, professor at Oxford University, an epidemiologist with expertise in immunology, vaccine development, and mathematical modeling of infectious diseases; and Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, professor at Stanford University Medical School, a physician, epidemiologist, health economist, and public health policy expert focusing on infectious diseases and vulnerable populations.”

The declaration states, “The most compassionate approach that balances the risks and benefits of reaching herd immunity, is to allow those who are at minimal risk of death to live their lives normally to build up immunity to the virus through natural infection, while better protecting those who are at highest risk.”

With few exceptions, world leaders followed the lead of the Chinese communist regime when responding to the outbreak of the virus, imposing unprecedented lockdowns. Sweden, which didn’t impose a lockdown, experienced a lower percentage of deaths than some locales and nations that set restrictions.

In the United States, President Donald Trump delegated the decisions on lockdown measures to the governors of individual states. In the end, all but a handful of states enacted some sort of restrictive measures.



Adopting me: An adopted child shares his perspective

by **Jamey Robert Stegmaier**

The day was no different than any other. It was the fall semester of my sophomore year in college; the changing colors of the leaves against the backdrop of weathered stone buildings made the walk to my dorm seem like a stroll through a promotional brochure for the university. I scanned my ID card to enter my residence hall, unlocked my room, and closed the door behind me.

Then I opened the letters from my birth mother for the first time.

I had requested that my parents send me the letters a few weeks before to that day. I had received them over the years—eight in total—forwarded from the priest who had arranged my adoption twenty years in the past.

Whenever I received a letter in the mail, I asked my parents to put it with the others.

“You can read the letters at any time,” my mother assured me. “Whenever you’re ready.”

It wasn’t really a matter of being ready or not; I just wasn’t all that curious. I was adopted when I was three days old, so my adoptive parents had always been my parents. My friends ask when I first found out that I was adopted, and I don’t have a good answer for them.

I’ve always known. My parents didn’t hide it from me. So there was no aura of mystery, no great secret about the contents of those letters. They were available, and I was in no rush to read them.

I should mention that I harbored no resentment against my birth mother. Although my parents didn’t know much, they knew that she had been a young, single mother, and she wanted to give me a better life than the one she was able to give me at the time.

As a child, that made sense to me, and I was grateful to have both a mother and a father to raise me.

Perhaps you’ve heard someone say on television or in the movies or even in person, “You’re not my real mom/dad!” I’ve

heard that line a number of times, but it’s never occurred to me to say it. What does that mean, “real” mom or “real” dad? My real mom is the woman who taught me how to read, who held her cool palm to my forehead when I got a migraine, who cried a little when I went abroad for the summer.

My real father is the man who rigged my Power Wheel tricycle for extra traction, who showed me how to find the best kindling for campfires, who complimented my posture after I received an award in high school. My parents are the people who nurtured me from the beginning.

In the back of my mind, one of the reasons I didn’t open those letters for so many years is that I was protective of my parents. I didn’t want them to feel like I was going to replace them. That one day I’d be done with them and return to my birthmother. Children are surprisingly conscious of their parents’ feelings; although I picked my fair share of fights with them over the years, my adoption was off limits. My parents gave me my life, the greatest gift possible.

But during my sophomore year, I became increasingly aware that there was another person out there who had given me life. I started to have questions: What if there was a disease that ran in my family that I needed to know about? What if my birth mother had passed away or was going to pass away before I even opened the letters? What if my birth mother or biological father were famous? What if I had other siblings out there? What if they attended the same college I did? What if I had met my biological brother or sister?

What if I accidentally dated my biological sister?

Enough was enough. I requested the letters from my parents. Including my mother and father in the process, I knew, would be important. I didn’t want them to feel out of the loop, especially since they were already sensitive to the distance between us when I was away at school.

I sorted the letters by the dates on the faded envelopes. The oldest was already open, read long ago by my parents on the day I was born.

TIPS ON CHRISTIAN FOSTER PARENTING

by **Kathryn Rateliff Barr**

From their earliest days, God’s people have answered the call to care for children who need a home. Deuteronomy 14:29, Psalms 10:18 and James 1:26-27 addresses how believers should extend care and support to orphans.

The Wesley brothers, who founded the Methodist church, set up orphanages to care for children who had no family to care for them. Today, many Christians feel a call to provide foster care for children in need.



LIVE FAITH

The homes that foster kids come from can be horrifically damaging, providing negative parenting models, according to the book, “The Compassion Revolution,” written by Dave Donaldson, cofounder of the charity Convoy of Hope. The book addresses how he and his family become involved in foster care. Your example can provide a healthy, loving, Christian role model for foster kids and for their birth parents, who might someday regain custody. Treat your foster child with love, fairness and impart the hope for a better future. If the foster child has no ties to the Christian faith, your example can create that connection and teach him about a loving God who cares for him. If the child and birth family have no strong objections, include devotions, Bible stories and church attendance in the child’s routine.

TRAINING

If you have the resources and the compassion for parenting foster children, you can contact a Christian foster program such as Lifeline Children’s Services or Bethany Christian Service or The Methodist Home; or you can use other good programs like Kansas Children’s Service League or KVC. Get the training you need to reach out to children who need foster placement, but love isn’t all you need. Fostering can be rocky, and without training and support, you can create additional problems for foster kids if you aren’t prepared for the problems that often come when a child is removed from parents because of abuse, neglect or incarceration. Learn how to reach out to these kids and build a bridge of love and trust a foster child can hold on to, according to Adoption.com.

I extracted the stationary from the pink envelope (my birthmother didn’t know that I was going to be a boy) as if it were an artifact from a forgotten time, an ancient papyrus that might turn to dust in my hands.

“From day one when I first found out I was pregnant, #1 on my list was to write an ‘open’ letter to my child and his/her parents...” She went on to explain her hopes for me, her blessings, and that her greatest worry was that I would hate her for giving me away.

I turned the handwritten pages one by one, soaking in the information. I felt like I was reading a biography about myself. So far removed from the content of the letters, it wasn’t until I opened the fourth letter and a photo fell out that I truly realized that I was reading about myself, my birthmother, my lineage.

The photo was of a baby, maybe a year or so old. Besides the longer hair that indicated that it was a girl, the child looked exactly—exactly—like me at that age.

Something opened in me and I started to cry. I had two wonderful, annoying siblings with whom I had grown up, but I had never looked upon the face of another and seen myself. I didn’t know that was a type of connection a person could have.

THE HURT CHILD

Your foster child might be carrying anger, poor personal boundaries, mistrust and fear when she arrives. Communicate your concern and desire to care for her at the same time that you establish clear limits and conditions on her behavior. Pray for your foster child’s emotional, physical, mental and spiritual healing at the same time that you apply all of the tools you learned in training. Reinforce the child’s belief in herself and her value as a human and a child of God. Praise her in specifics when she does well such as, “I’m pleased with the way you’re catching up in school. Your determination is impressive.”

BUILDING SUPPORT AND MEMORIES

As a foster parent, you can work within the faith community. Address your child’s past in the most loving way, helping your foster child stay connected with his birth family, if possible, as you also help him build connections in the faith community. You can take pictures of the child enjoying various activities, building healthy memories the child can access when times are stressful. Never lose sight of the reunification goal that guides many foster placements. A scrapbook of the child’s life can anchor the love you share in the child’s memory.

many people in my life.

God has graced me with enough love for my adoptive parents and my biological mother, my siblings and my biological siblings. Different types of love, but an abundance of springs to tap.

Not only do I have two parents who have raised and nurtured and loved me for twenty-eight years, but I also have a birthmother who carried me for nine months so that I may live.

I am truly blessed.

Jamey lives and works in St. Louis. He writes a daily humor blog, jameystegmaier.com. Published 2/189

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Three reasons why Christians should consider fostering children

As Christians we should be committed to taking the love of Christ to some of the most broken areas of our community. One of those areas is orphan care, and we should want to see a culture that cares for the fatherless.

An enormous—but often forgotten—step in caring for orphans is foster care. I asked a local Christian social worker why Christians should care about fostering. This was her response:

I've been a foster-care worker for some time. This has given me the incredible opportunity to be a witness of what it looks like when families step out of their comfort zone and step into a child and their family's lives. I've seen foster parents who lose sleep for weeks to wake children up and take them to the rest room because trauma sometimes makes children wet the bed every night. I've seen foster parents worry, cry, and fight for help for these children only to lose battle after battle with schools, DSS, or that child's parents. I've seen foster parents break down in tears and tell me they don't know how to help and they don't know if they can take any more.

And when that happens I don't know what to tell them. Because there is no earthly reason why someone would want to be a foster parent.

In fact, I think it takes an incredible measure of God's love, grace, and wisdom being poured into you and out of you to be a foster parent, which is the very reason Christians are called to do it.

1 By choosing to be foster parents, Christians are choosing to live a life that demonstrates the love and humility of the Gospel.

Since I started my job, I've been challenged to face head-on some of the things

I would like to most ignore, such as the presence of sexual abuse, violence, death, and fear. And in the midst of that, God has taught me some incredible lessons about what it means to be forgiven and to accept his grace and mercy. Instead of painting those who abuse or neglect their children as monsters, I've learned to look at them and see the effects of a fallen world and sin from which I've only been removed because of some mixture of privilege and God's grace.

It's really easy for me to look at the families I work with and to say they are there because they deserve to be there, because they've made bad choices and are reaping what they sowed.

There's a measure of truth to that, of course. But only a measure. Because what the Gospel teaches us is that their sin is no worse than ours. Most of us don't act like we believe that. We don't really think that we deserve no better than the worst of their consequences. And when we do that, we are cheapening God's grace.

Most of the people that I live my life with have food. We have safety. We have the ability to seek friendships. We have family to call on when we need them. Who are we to keep this grace to ourselves? Jesus didn't. He came down to us and sacrificed himself entirely for our flourishing, despite the ugliness and the neediness of our sin. And that's what foster care requires. It requires reaching out and making yourself available for sacrifice despite what you might think about the families you are serving.

In return, we learn an even greater depth of the love that Jesus has for us. And we get the privilege to show that love to the world.



2 By choosing to be foster parents, Christians are choosing to live a life of faith.

Foster care is a voluntary act of service to a government organization that retains control over every major decision affecting that child's life. You are the caretakers of a child that is very literally not yours. That means you get some (but not all) of the say in where they go to the doctor, where they get therapy, if they are on medication, who they have contact with, and most importantly, where they spend their future. In fact, you may have very little say about their haircut, the clothes they wear, or the language they use.

One of the hardest parts of my job is giving foster parents bad news. I once had a foster child who needed to be moved to a different state. Every week the foster father called me, weeping and begging for a different decision. It broke

my heart when I had to answer, "My hands are tied. This has to happen."

After watching this foster father attend therapy twice a week with that child, work on discipline every day to establish a routine with them, teach an almost-teenager about teeth-brushing, and advocate at school to get the help the child needed to learn, he was forced to say goodbye. That child had grown, healed, and learned to love at this home. But the child left, and now all this man can do is pray.

He can pray that this child remembers the lessons learned, that the love poured out would take root and keep growing, and that this kid would be safe and supported in the new home.

Like the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, this foster parent may never see the results of his faith. That can be painful. But it can also be incredibly rewarding. The rewards that I have seen in the lives

of foster parents have been a deep prayer life and an incredible outpouring of wisdom.

3 By choosing to be foster parents, Christians are choosing to take a stand against injustice and to care for the poor.

James 1:27 says, "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: To visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world." Christ's heart is for the vulnerable, and we who call ourselves by his name share in his heart. It's our duty as Christians to stand up for the citizens in our community who lack the power to do so for themselves. It is hard to think of a population that is more vulnerable than foster children—young, poor, from minority populations, from broken families.

There is no earthly reason why someone would want to be a foster parent. But there is every heavenly reason why they would. Those of us who have been touched by the gospel become like the gospel—full of grace. And as we love those the world finds unlovely, we join with a God who will one day "wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore."

—J.D. Greear is the pastor of The Summit Church, in Raleigh-Durham, NC and author of *Gaining by Losing: Why the Future Belongs to Churches That Send* (2015), *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary* (2011), and others.

— www.jdgreear.com

Here are my top five reasons for adopting a child



CARRIE CRAFT
Adoption/Foster
Care Expert

viewpoint

Looking back on conversations with other adoptive parents and my

own experiences with adoption and foster parenting, I feel that there are truly five solid reasons to want to adopt a child.

While everyone may have their own motivation to explore adoption, the core of the desire for a family to adopt and what propels that family forward to completing an adoption, should be based on something deeper.

1 The desire to give a child a family. The prospective adoptive family wants to provide a child with a loving home and family. This includes every-

thing that makes a home a loving place to be and a family that is an accepting group.

This desire includes the exchange of family traditions, the sharing of faith, and of memory making moments. It also means accepting the child for who they are - even their faults. Understanding that the child has a history and heritage that also needs to be respected and embraced.

2 The desire to help a child move on in life. The adoptive parents have an interest in helping a child heal from past grief and pain, whether this comes from abuse, neglect, being abandoned, or orphaned. The adoptive family wants to help the child start a new life and knows that there will be ups and downs with adoptive parenting and is prepared for these challenges.

3 The ability to provide for another child in all ways. The prospective adoptive parent wants to share their home with a child and have the physical space for another child. They also have the time and the emotional space in their heart for a new family member. The adoptive family is also financially secure enough to adopt comfortably.

4 The entire adoptive family agrees to the adoption. Everyone in

the family agrees that adding to the home through adoption is the right thing to do. All children in the home are also excited about adopting. Going through with an adoption when children in the home are not on board with the plan is not a good idea.

5 The adoptive family knows a child in need of a family. The prospective adoptive family is aware of a child who needs an adoptive home. The child may be a family friend, a relative, or a child they met at church or within the neighborhood.

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Celebrate the Holidays in Downtown Topeka!

As we enter the Holiday season, Downtown is looking better than ever! People are getting in the Christmas Spirit!

Christmas shopping in Downtown Topeka can be fun, with all the unique shops and a bit of nostalgia in the air. It might remind you of a time when shopping was more exciting, more personal, and less of a chore.

Following are some tidbits from some of your friendly downtown merchants. Why not take a trip downtown and visit them?

A Full-Service Florist & Gift Shop

Absolute Design by Brenda, 629 S. Kansas Avenue, offers hand-selected flowers and exquisite designs with delivery throughout the Topeka area. They have an expansive line of gifts, jewelry and home decor for all your holiday and year-round needs.

Save \$5.00 by using the coupon on this page!

You can also order or wire flowers 24 hours a day at the website: www.absolutedesignbybrenda.com.



Let your sweet tooth run wild

Hazel Hill Chocolates is located at 724 S. Kansas Avenue. Owners Nick & Terry Xidis invest their hearts and hands in fine chocolate and confectionery. Hazel Hill, Terry's grandmother, is a symbol of their dedication to a family tradition of "the best in everything they do." Nick is the third-generation chocolatier, and they use only the finest ingredients, chocolate, fresh cream and butter, to produce handmade treats that explode with flavor.

"Stroll into our cozy shop, savor the intoxicating aroma of newborn sweets," Terry says. "You'll never leave empty handed."

Handmade chocolate truffles,

home-style fudge, crispy-creamy caramel apples and more - they fashion delightful treats for every palate. Need a gift basket, gift box, or just a few delicious chocolates to go? They'll take care of all the packing and shipping, too.



Diamonds are Forever

With the Christmas season in full swing, you'll find many specials and gift ideas at David's Jewelers, 623 S. Kansas - a family business that has served Topeka for four generations, with over 50 years in business.

Diamond rings, pendants and ear-



rings usually top the list but they also offer vivid colored gemstones in unique settings, watches, clocks, statues and fine crystal.

"Gifts can start at \$20.00 and go from there," said Mitzi from behind the counter at David's. "We will be glad to help you find that special gift for that special someone."

Pancakes and more

Hanover's Pancake House at 1034 S. Kansas Avenue has been a local favorite since 1969! With a wide variety on the menu, and friendly service, it's a great place to stop for breakfast, lunch or brunch! They are also famous for the pork tenderloin sandwich, and it is huge!



With the friendly service and generous portions, you won't go away hungry!

A little bit of Heaven

Working side-by-side at Cashmere Gourmet Popcorn, Bill and Angie Anderson's goal is to create a high-quality product in every handcrafted batch of popcorn, and provide it to you with unmatched customer service. Faith and family is the driving force behind this amazing company. In fact, their family motto has always been, and will always be, "Thanks Be To God!"



Along with daughters Aleigha and Emily, they produce, package and market the popcorn. With about twenty flavors to choose from,



you'll find a little bit of heaven in every bag. Hours are Tuesday-Friday 10-6 and Saturday 10-4; closed Sunday & Monday.



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Holiday Memories, Events, & Gift Ideas!

Check Out Some of the Upcoming Holiday Events & Activities

Personalized gifts

For a variety of personalized gift options, contact Melissa at Elk Creek Engraving. They have a large selection of awards and gifts for all of your business and personal needs.



There are so many other unique shops downtown, you won't believe it! Don't stop with this incomplete list! There's plenty more to discover in Downtown Topeka this holiday season!

Bring a friend, or the family, and re-discover the joy of shopping downtown!

While you're making your way around the downtown area, check out all of the new things to look at on both sides of the street - there are lots of new features! And watch for these downtown events and opportunities during the holiday season:

EATS & BEATS – Nov. 4, 11, 18, & 25, 5pm, Every Plaza Downtown. Bass Hertz Productions spinning vinyl, bringing you some of the best of the 60s, 70s, and 80s, peppered with some new flare. Plus your favorite local food trucks.



FIRST FRIDAY ART MARKET – Nov. 6, Downtown and NOTO arts district. Arts, antiques, fine crafts, flea market items, snacks & beverages, entertainment and more.

SJ HAZIM - I PRESSED ON - Nov. 7, 2pm, TPAC. Experience

music geared toward healing. I PRESSED ON will feature opening performances with students from Topeka public schools. Also featuring Trevon Payne and Cali Pitts from South Central Cartel. Price: \$25.00



"ONE plus ONE" for Violin and Cello – Nov. 8, 3pm, Grace Episcopal Cathedral, 701 SW 8th Ave. Featuring Mandy Wang, violin, and Sunnat Ibragimov, cello. Seating is limited. Online reservations can be obtained at <https://reopen.church/r/O7g8vHQ>. Don't forget to wear your mask. Freewill donations will be accepted



COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING DINNER – Nov. 26, 12-2pm, AG HALL. A warm and inviting meal is provided to residents of Topeka & surrounding areas. For delivery & info: 295-3889



CHOCOLATE NUTCRACKER – Nov. 28, 2pm & 7pm, TPAC. Tickets available at the TPAC box



office or Ticketmaster.com. For info: 785-234-2787

parade floats and performers lining the streets.

MIRACLE ON KANSAS AVENUE PARADE – Dec. 5, Downtown. This year's event will be a "reverse" parade, in which people drive by a route around the Capitol to look at the different

BALLET MIDWEST'S THE NUTCRACKER – Dec. 11, 12, 13, TPAC. Tickets available at the TPAC box office or Ticketmaster.com. For info: 785-234-2787



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Welcome... TO NORTH TOPEKA!



Celebrate the Holidays in North Topeka!

Lots going on in North Topeka during Holidays

The North Topeka area has a lot going on this time of year! Of course, NOTO Arts District has been a hub of activity for a while now, Holiday shopping and activities in NOTO are unlike any other part of the city!

But there are also many other events going on north of the river:

A Decade of Art - NOTO Arts Center, 935 N. Kansas. This special exhibit welcomes back NOTO's finest artists. This exhibit will showcase artwork from those who have shown in NOTO over the past 10 years. Art will be auctioned off via silent auction through November with NOTO receiving 50% of sales.



November 7, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm. NOTO Arts Center, 935 N. Kansas. Influences on NOTO: A Historical Review of North Topeka. Visit the exhibit of historic North Topeka dating back to the 1880's. November 7, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm,

NOTO Arts Center, 935 N. Kansas. NOTO Arts Center is now open Thursday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. It also stays open late on 1st & 3rd Fridays. Check with them for info on other events!

First Friday - Topeka Arts District has become an attraction to Art Lovers and History Buffs alike with beautiful scenes of art and history. The restaurants, locally owned shops, art galleries and studios have become a favorite art walk destination.

THE PAD RESTAURANT. Try our lunch specials Monday - Friday! 234-3596, 1730 N. Topeka Blvd.

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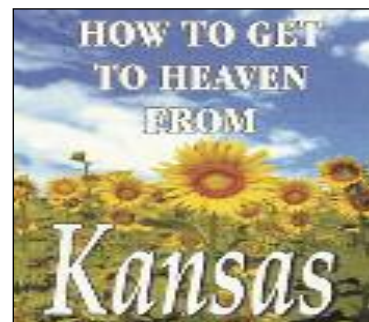
Come and be a part of what God is doing at Family of God Church. 1231 NW Eugene St. Sunday 10:30am & 6:00pm. FOGchurch.com

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More important than living in KANSAS is where you will live forever. Just as you would look at a map of KANSAS to find your way, so you must look at the Bible to find your way to heaven. The Bible says, "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14). Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (Jn. 14:6). Jesus is the only way to Heaven and He gave these directions on getting there.

1. Realize you are a sinner. Everyone starts the same place spiritually. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of god." (Rom. 3:23). Sin's penalty keeps you out of Heaven and condemns you to Hell, separating you from God. Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." Sin brings both physical & spiritual death. "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." (Rev. 20:14).

2. Realize Jesus paid the penalty. Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection provided a way for you to go to heaven and restore your relationship with God. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). Since Jesus, God's Son, was the only One who could pay for our sin, He is the only Way to Heaven.

3. Repent of your sin and receive Jesus as your Savior. In order to go to Heaven from KANSAS, or anywhere else, you must accept Christ by calling on Him in prayer. He tells us in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Use the following prayer, or one similar to it, to receive Him now:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner. I believe that you died and rose again for me. Please forgive me of my sin, become Lord of my life, and take me to heaven when I die. I am trusting you completely, and in nothing I can do. Thank you Jesus! Amen.

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It's all getting a little confusing with people calling you, asking you questions, and everyone having their own ideas as to what you need to do and when.

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phone tree options while a robotic voice tells you how important you are to them. Yeah, right.

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"HEALING AFTER THE SUICIDE OF A LOVED ONE"

("HEAL") - or Survivors of Suicide (SOS). 1st & 3rd Tue., 7-8:30pm, Pozez Education Center of Stormont Vail Hospital, 1505 SW 8th St. Serving anyone who has lost a loved one by suicide.

PRISON OUTREACH MINISTRY - Every Tue., 7-9pm, Topeka Women's Prison, 815 Rice Rd. Reaching out to those who can't come in, finding freedom behind bars, inspiring inmates to seek salvation during a difficult time. Providing support & guidance through the Holy Spirit to offer strength. Director: Don Garner, 286-0489 or faithfamilylifeministries@gmail.com.

GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS - Every Wed, 7pm, St. Francis Hospital, meeting room #8.

MOMS-IN-TOUCH PRAYER GROUP - Every Wed., 2:30-3:30pm, Library at Cair Paravel-Latin School. Experience God's power through prayer as we lift our students, teachers, staff, administrators & board up to the Lord. For info: 357-0369.

DIVORCECARE PROGRAMS - (For updates check www.divorcecare.org) locations and times:

WED. - 6:30pm, Topeka Bible Church, 1101 SW Mulvane. Cost: \$15. Child care provided. For info: 379-0505 or www.divorcecare.org.

WED. - 6:45 - 8:45pm, Walnut View Christian Church, 3634 SE 37th St. (just East of 37th & Croco). Cost: \$10 registration (scholarships available). The video seminar series featuring some of the nation's foremost experts on divorce and recovery topics, combined with support group discussion of the materials. Complimentary child care children up to the fifth grade. Info: 266-7550 or walnutviewcc@att.net.

WED. - 6:30pm, Northland Christian Church, 3102 NW Topeka Blvd. No Cost. 286-1204, www.northland.cc

PROSTATE CANCER SUPPORT GROUP - 1st Thurs., 7pm, Saint Francis Hospital 2nd floor conf. room of the cancer unit. For info: 266-9533.

CELEBRATE RECOVERY - Every Fri., 6pm, 1912 Gage Blvd. A Christ-centered program, based on 8 principles found in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Applying these Biblical principles, become free from addictive & dysfunctional behaviors. crtopekaks.org.

NICOTINE ANONYMOUS - Every Fri., 6:30pm, Town & Country Church Renaissance Room, 4925 SW 29th St., use west door cross red foot bridge. A fellowship of men & women helping each other to live free of nicotine. No fees. 402-321-486; Laboomaha@att.net

TOPEKA NAR-ANON FAMILY GROUP - For families & friends who are affected by someone else's narcotic addiction. Every Sat., noon-1:15 pm, m. A, 1st Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar, enter on S. side, door A. www.naranonmidwest.org

COVENANT KEEPERS - 3rd Sat. Group for people who want to see their marriage saved when their spouse wants out. For info: 816-453-0884 or 816-966-0927.

Christmas Parade to be "reversed"

The annual downtown Topeka holiday parade on Dec. 5 will take a different route in 2020.

Downtown Topeka Inc., which organizes the Miracle on Kansas Avenue Parade, has decided the parade will be a reverse parade.

That means people would drive by a certain route to look at the different parade floats and performers.

Stephanie Wilhelm with the Greater Topeka Partnership confirmed the 25th annual Miracle on Kansas Avenue parade on Dec 5th.

"We will be having a reverse parade, where the floats will line the street and those wishing to view them will parade themselves though the route. We will also be moving the route to be around the capital as it has wider streets and less obstacles for this set up," Wilhelm said in an email.

Every year on the Saturday following Thanksgiving, downtown Topeka kicks off the holiday season with a fun-filled day of Small Business Saturday shopping, dining, and music. This year's Miracle on Kansas Avenue Lighted Christmas Parade was set for one week later on Dec. 5th.

The MKA Parade's "lighted" holiday-themed entries usually include walking groups, dance teams, marching bands, bicycles, Shriners, military vehicles, public service vehicles, floats, car clubs... and the "official" Santa appearance closing the parade.

Specific times, registration, will be announced soon.

Lecompton has Midwest's largest Christmas trees and ornaments display

Experience the holiday magic of Christmas when visiting Historic Lecompton. Visitors can see an indoor display of over 150 trees decorated in antique, Victorian, vintage and theme decor - including turn of the century and WW II era decorations. Among the many trees is a barb-wire tree, a feather tree, a Victorian Costume tree and many more unique decorations.

At the same time, visitors can also



Landmark. Lecompton is known as the "Birthplace of the Civil War,

Where Slavery Began to Die." Lecompton was recently named one of the "Best Small Towns in Kansas" by Kansas Magazine readers.

The Christmas display will be offered from November 3 to January 3. The display and museum is open 10 am to 4 pm Wednesday through Saturday and 1 to 5 pm Sunday.

For more information on the display and the museum, go to lecomptonkansas.com.

Covid anxiety, lockdowns causing sharp rise in drug abuse

Drug abuse and other effects of the coronavirus and lockdowns continues to rise with mental health being hit particularly hard.

In Ohio, like other states, counties are seeing a startling rise in drug abuse. Franklin County, Ohio has seen a sharp increase in deaths from overdose since the start of COVID-19, prompting the local coroner to inform residents of these grim facts.

Dr. Anahi Ortiz said the opioid epidemic affecting Franklin County has been "catastrophic" and it's directly connected with the coronavirus. "By the first six months of 2020, current data shows that we saw a 73.4 percent increase in overdose fatalities in Franklin County," Dr. Ortiz pointed out.

"I think the anxiety and depression that has come from COVID-19 has exacerbated

addiction in a number of ways," she added. "Thinking about families who already have the anxiety and isolation from COVID-19 and their loved one has just died from addiction, that's just a tremendous burden to bear."

Dr. Ortiz explained that 85% of the overdose deaths were fentanyl-related.

"Then you have folks who perhaps because they became unemployed, etc., may have not been able to buy their usual, and then when they do get some money, they start using again, and they start at the same doses they were taking previously, and that's when they die," Ortiz added.

She noted that Franklin County has launched training events where locals learn how to use an opioid-reversal medication called Narcan as officials have worked to help residents receive treatment and resources.

Ultimately, patients must understand the associated risks when taking opioid-related medications, and that knowledge could help prevent some addiction before it begins.

Metro Voice has previously reported on other mental instabilities linked to the coronavirus pandemic, such as the rise in suicide, anxiety, and depression.

In August, the CDC released a report revealing that 25.5 percent of Americans age 18 to 24 had seriously considered suicide with the past 30 days. For adults ages 25 to 44, that percentage was 16 percent.

Anxiety and depression among younger adults, women, and the poor have been the highest. Data collected by the Census Bureau showed that a third of Americans were exhibiting signs of anxiety, depression, or both.

entertainment

MOVIES, STREAMING, BOOKS,
MUSIC, INTERVIEWS & MORE!

“Miracle on Christmas” movie focuses on reason for season in difficult

Cooler weather means the holiday season – and a new round of Christmas movies – is on the way.

“Miracle on Christmas,” an uplifting, faith-based, holiday movie starring Erin Bethea (“Fireproof”), Jason Burkey (“October Baby”), Brett Varvel (“Play the Flute”) and Micah Lynn Hanson (“Like Arrows”), releases on DVD and streaming platforms on November 3.

The film tells the story of Mary Boyce (Bethea), a woman dealing with open loss, hidden fears and wavering in her faith as she hosts the annual family Christmas get-together. Her loved ones sense something is amiss, but it takes an unexpected visitor (Varvel) to refocus the attention of one and all on the real miracle of the season — the birth of Christ — and the hope that transcends even the starkest life circumstances.

Having previewed the movie, actor Mark Christopher Lawrence believes “Miracle on Christmas” is particularly timely in light of our nation’s recent trials:

“Right now, at this moment in history, what we need is a reminder that God is on our side,” he said. “This film gives us that hope and joy and reminds us that in the middle of



the hardest times, he sees our struggles.”

Actress Robia Scott (“Unplanned”) felt a connection to the movie on an emotional level, saying, “It is faith-centered, family-friendly, uplifting and — above all — thoroughly enjoyable.”

Deemed “too Christian for Christmas” by some of the big Hollywood players who screened it, “Miracle on Christmas” is the debut effort from writer/director Thomas Bonifield, former Moscow bureau chief and deputy foreign editor at NBC News.

The movie has snow, lots of classic

Christmas carols and plenty of decorations, but Bonifield said, “It endeavors to break the mold of the cookie-cutter Yuletide pictures of recent years. This movie will also push you to reflect as it tackles hard questions with solid answers grounded in timeless biblical truths about God’s steadfast love and faithfulness even in times of trouble.”

“Miracle on Christmas” is available now for pre-order at Amazon, Walmart and Target. For more information and to watch the trailer, visit <https://www.miracleonchristmas.com/>.



Disney’s inspiring film ‘Clouds’ teaches us how to live ... and die

By Michael Foust

The best movie of the year may be a new Disney film that never landed in theaters.

Clouds (PG-13), now on Disney Plus, follows the inspirational story of Zach Sobiech, a joy-filled high schooler who is diagnosed with bone cancer and told by his doctor he likely has only a few months to live.

But instead of wasting his final days on Earth, Sobiech chooses to separate the important stuff from the trivial.

Realizing he has a talent from God, he begins writing music about his situation, about his joy in life, about hope and optimism. Eventually, one of his songs (also called Clouds) becomes a hit.

“I hope my story helps everyone to realize that you don’t have to find out you’re dying to start living,” he says.

The movie is based on a true story about the real Zach Sobiech, a Minnesota teenager who died in 2013 but wrote music in his final months. His best-known song (Clouds) has been streamed or downloaded 200 million times.

In the film, his mother tells him, “Maybe this is some kind of weird chance for you to forget about all the superficial stuff that people waste their time on.”

Sobiech is faced with multiple gut-wrenching questions, knowing death is just around the corner: Does he pursue a romance with his girlfriend? Does he write a college essay, as all his classmates are doing? Does he go to his own graduation party if he’s too weak?

Clouds has faith elements, even though it’s not a traditional faith-based film. Asked what he wants to be read at his funeral, Sobiech answers: the Parable of the Talents.

“That one makes sense to me,” he says.

(In real life, Sobiech’s mother said she prayed, “Okay, Lord, you can have him. But if he must die, I want it to be for something big. I want someone’s life to be changed forever.”)

Clouds is an entertaining film that’s filled with uplifting music, a gripping storyline and a sweet romance. Mostly, though, it’s inspiring. It encourages us to contemplate eternity and to concentrate on what truly matters. It urges us to live life with joy and to cast aside worthless distractions. It tells us to live as each day may be our last.

It’s rated PG-13 for “brief strong lan-

guage,” yet I didn’t catch anything. (I spoke with three friends who watched it and also didn’t hear any strong language.) At the most, it has a couple of OMGs (which sound a lot like “gosh”). Additionally, there are at least two scenes parents may want to skip: a scene at the beginning of the film where Zach sings a made-up song about his body (his mom hates the tune) and a scene where he and his girlfriend kiss at her house (Zach runs out before it goes too far). It should have been rated PG. For those who want it, ClearPlay offers a filter for the movie.

It stars Fin Argus as Sobiech; Sabrina Carpenter as his best friend, Sammy; and Madison Iseman as his girlfriend, Amy.

Clouds may be the best film of the year. At least, it deserves a nomination.

Also streaming this month:

Adults/teens

Enola Holmes (Netflix) -- Sherlock Holmes’ younger sister, Enola, tries to find her missing mother. The film stars Millie Bobby Brown (Stranger Things) as the opinionated and spunky Enola. It’s rated PG-13 for some violence and minor language. ClearPlay offers a filter.

Free State of Jones (Netflix) -- A Mississippi farmer named Newton Knight turns against the Confederacy during the Civil War and leads an uprising. Free State of Jones is based on a true story and includes strong faith elements, including by Knight, a Christian. It’s rated R for war violence but includes no sexuality and only minor language. VidAngel offers a filter for the Amazon Prime version.

Superman Returns (Netflix) -- Superman returns to Earth after a five-year absence and discovers -- to his surprise -- we have learned to live without him. ClearPlay offers a filter for the Amazon Prime version.

Children

The Magic School Bus Rides Again: The Frizz Connection (Netflix) -- Lightning splits the Magic School Bus into three sections, scattering the class across the globe.

Carmen Sandiego: Season 3 (Netflix) -- Carmen continues her battle against the evil V.I.L.E. as she travels to such locations as Venice, Mexico City and New Orleans.

Michael Foust is the father of an amazing wife, Julie, and the father of four small children. He has covered the intersection of faith and entertainment more than 15 years.

Kathie Lee Gifford releases first of five films about power of redemption

Kathie Lee Gifford believes in the power of redemption. Now the Emmy Award-winning entertainer is sharing that hopeful message in a five-part film series.

Part one of “Then Came You,” a lighthearted romance that she wrote, produced and starred in, is now available on demand.

“Then Came You” follows a “lonely widow who plans a trip around the world with her late husband’s ashes, intending on visiting all the places from their favorite movies. During her first stop in Scotland, she meets the innkeeper of the Bed & Breakfast she’s staying in who ends up changing her life forever,” the film’s synopsis reads.

Gifford, who like the character of the movie lost her husband in recent years, hopes the film will impact anyone who feels trapped in grief and is looking for another shot to live out their God-given passions and



dreams. “I’ve written this movie but it’s the first of five that I have mapped out,” Gifford said. “In this movie, it’s a story of total redemption and as redemption often is, it takes a long time. I didn’t want some packed kind of religious movie, because I’m not a

religious person. I’m not. I love Jesus. I’m a faith-filled person but I’m not comfortable around religiosity at all. From reading scripture, Jesus wasn’t, either. The only time he got angry was at the religious people, the Pharisees and the Sadducees.”

Gifford, who lost her husband Frank, hopes the film will help viewers process their own grief.

If you live long enough, you’re going to experience that kind of loss in life and that kind of grief,” she said. “So as believers, that’s why I could hold my dead husband in my arms and rejoice. I knew where he was. It was not a tragedy, it was a triumph of eternal life. We all have our own ways, but hope is so important in a person’s life. When we lose it, there’s nothing left to live for, is there?”



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ClearPlay lets families 'clean up' Disney Plus movies

By Michael Foust

The best feature of Disney Plus is its wide selection of popular films -- from Marvel to Star Wars to studio classics -- and it's all available for one low price.

But if you have children, there's a downside: Many of those movies aren't exactly kid-friendly.

Black Panther has tons of gruesome violence. The Rise of Skywalker has multiple frightening scenes. And Hamilton -- the toe-tapping musical ode to the Founding Fathers -- is filled with coarse language.

Thankfully, there's a new product that offers a solution.

ClearPlay, a Utah-based company, began offering filters for Disney Plus movies in recent weeks, shortly after it also added Netflix titles to its lineup. (Previously, ClearPlay only filtered Amazon Prime titles.)

In layman's terms, this means you can watch Black Panther without the mega-violence, Hamilton without the profanity, and so forth. All you need is a laptop or computer. (More on that in a moment.)

It's one of the most exciting advancements for film-loving families in the past decade, simply because Disney's library dominates the family movie realm. ClearPlay is the only company filtering Disney titles.

Tim Winter of the Parents Television Council applauded ClearPlay, saying the technology gives "parents greater control over the content their families consume."

"Our research has shown that just because a content rating suggests a program is appropriate for children, that is often not the case," Winter said.

ClearPlay requires a subscription (\$7.99 a month after a 30-day free trial) and a Google Chrome browser. Then, by downloading the ClearPlay extension on your Chrome browser, you can filter out the violence, sex and language from Disney Plus films. (You can transfer it to your television through an HDMI cable or a mirroring device.)

Filters are available for every Marvel and Star Wars title, and for several dozen others films, too. (The

catalogue is expanding weekly.) ClearPlay also offers a filtering Blu-ray player.

Visit ClearPlay.com.

Also worth considering this month:

'The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader' (Disney Plus: Oct. 9) -- The final movie in the Narnia movie trilogy enters the Disney Plus lineup. (The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe and Prince Caspian already were on the platform.) It's based on the C.S. Lewis novels and is filled with Christian symbolism. Dawn Treader is rated PG for some frightening images and sequences of fantasy action.

'The Mandalorian' Season 2 (Disney Plus: Oct. 30) -- A bounty hunter travels the galaxy seeking justice while protecting a tiny creature called the Child (also known as "Baby Yoda"). The Mandalorian is set in the Star Wars universe and was well-received by most fans, including those who disliked the latest trilogy. I have not watched the second season, although the first season was mostly family-friendly. (ClearPlay offers filters for the first season.) Season 1 episodes were rated TV-14. Not appropriate for young children.

'It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown' (ABC: TBA) -- First aired in 1966, this fall-themed classic tells the story of Linus on his quest to witness the Great Pumpkin, a friendly Santa-type figure no one has ever seen. Despite ridicule from his friends, Linus remains resolute. Some Christians see faith-centric symbolism in the plot: Don't care what the world thinks. After all, the Christian faith also involves belief in what is not seen.

'Father Brown' Season 8 (Amazon's BritBox) -- It's one of the most family-friendly detective shows on television, and Season 8 is now on Amazon's BritBox. The plot involves a Catholic priest who has an uncanny ability to solve murder mysteries. Biblical themes, including God's grace and mercy, are plentiful.

Michael Foust has covered the intersection of faith and entertainment more than 15 years. He is the husband of a wife, Julie,

NEEDTOBREATHE album 'Out of Body' was worth the wait

Looking for more NEEDTOBREATHE? Well, this well-known Christian rock band recently dropped its seventh studio album, called Out of Body.

A collection of 11 songs, Out of Body is a blend of rock and folk, laced with other musical hints. It looks introspectively at purpose and passion as well as the ups and downs of friendship, family and faith.

"Mercy's Shore" invites listeners to understand that God provides rest and protection, the way a mother protects her child, by providing a place of safety for them: "We can rest in the arms of trust/There's no way that we can say/We've earned our way into light/All we have to do is stay."

Similarly, "Child Again" is about embracing the wonder and freedom of a childlikeness, which we are meant to do as we rest in God: "Where'd the wonder go?/Trading magic for measured hope/Traded dreaming for a worn out home/Tired of being in control."

"Survival," featuring Drew and Ellie Holcomb, is about a man who desperately needs Jesus every day: "I am a man in need of/A constant revival/Jesus, come quickly/I need you for my survival." Likewise, "Out of Body" discusses the necessity of seeing ourselves from an outside perspective.

"Alive" tells us that there is thrill and excitement in pursuing our passions and chasing our dreams, even through difficulties. Similar themes are heard in



"Riding High."

And in "Hang On," we are reminded to savor new experiences and fleeting moments, as life moves quickly: "You can look back over your shoulder, yeah, but don't look too long/It takes time to realize that your life's gonna pass you by."

"Seasons" finds the lead singer reassuring a close friend that no experience, high or low, lasts forever: "We're in for nasty weather/And I'll ride it out with you/We won't be riding highs and lows/Like tides of ocean blue/We won't be here forever/Just a moment then we're through."

"Who Am I" reminds listeners that they are loved by God, even when they don't feel it.

"Banks," according to NEEDTOBREATHE, is about the women in their lives whom the band members love and

admire: "I wanna hold you close but never hold you back/Just like the banks to the river."

In a tweet, NEEDTOBREATHE said of its latest album that it is "about our journey toward our true selves. It is about going beyond our own egos and giving our souls the most important seat at the table."

And, perhaps, that sums it up best. A beautiful work of art, Out of Body closely examines a desperate need for God and the intricacies of family and friendship.

Out of Body also encourages us to reach for hope amidst the hardships of life as we're taken on a journey that proclaims that healing and wonder are found in the arms of a Savior.

—Reviewed by Kristin Smith / PluggedIn

Kanye West to launch gospel music university

Aspiring singers will get a boost from Kanye West who is launching a gospel music university. West made the announcement on "The Joe Rogan Experience" Saturday. West talked for nearly three hours about his relationships with God, the music industry, his presidential run, abortion, racism and wanting to lead a free world. In the episode, he also disclosed that he would be reimagining gospel singing and launching a university. "The songs that we're doing at Sunday service is basically my book of hymns for the future gospel university that I'm creating," West told Rogan. "I've envisioned and will manifest a 200,000-seat stadium, circular, with 100,000 gospel singers." West, who has always been a visionary, likened his university to the type of training one would receive when training for the Olympics or professional sports. "People will go to this university and they will train the way a Russian Olympic swimmer [does]. Picture like they will be in the pool, six days a week, at least, if not seven days, he explained. The Chicago native explained that people who sing for the church do so voluntarily as a "tithing or pro bono." "People don't practice that as much as we practice going to studio to rap, or practice playing basketball for the NBA," West continued. "It's making the NBA, so to say, the Colosseum for God. Have you heard like soccer chants with 60,000 people? I envision that for God — 100,000 people sometimes singing in



the impact his university would have on people. West opened up about his faith, his career, and his campaign for president. During the discourse, shot at West's ranch in Wyoming, West revealed that he chose to use a great deal of his income in 2019 to spread the Gospel through his Sunday Service Choir. "God had me stand in the gap, much like David. I'm a new Christian, I'm just a year recent convert, grew up in a church but I'm a recent convert," the father of four told Cannon. West and the Sunday Service Choir traveled

around the country last year. The group held worship services at Coachella, Skid Row in Los Angeles, Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston, Howard University in D.C., Louisiana, Chicago, Ohio, his properties in Calabasas and Wyoming, The Forum in Inglewood, and Jamaica.

harmony." The performer went on to give an example of what the singers in his school would sing. READ: Christian activists protest NBA "Glory, glory/Lord God Almighty/we lift our hands in praise," he sang as an example. "Picture 100,000 people in unison and that feeling and what that would do for our spirits, our souls. It's healing," West described of

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50+ Lifestyles A Guide to Enjoying Life in the Best Years

Seniors Can Benefit From Strength Training, Too

“You’re too old for that!”

How often have you heard those words? If you’re like most seniors, you’ve probably heard them far too often. This is especially true when it comes to strength training. Conventional “wisdom” would have us believe that seniors “are too old for that.”

Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, it is so emphatically incorrect that I would contend that you’re never too old to begin strength training!

Let’s look briefly at a couple of the benefits...

Lifting weights may help you live longer.

A study of seniors published in the journal “Preventative Medicine” found encouraging correlations between strength training and increased longevity. The study found that those who did strength training had 46 percent lower odds of death by any cause. The researchers also found that strength training reduced the risk of death from cardiac causes by 41 percent and cancer by 19 percent.

Strength training is good for your brain

In a study called SMART (Study of Mental and Resistance Training), researchers compared older adults who participated in intensive strength training with those who did only stretching and chair movements. They concluded that only the group that

performed strength training experienced any significant improvements in their cognitive function. In fact, the author commented, “The stronger people became, the greater the benefit for their brain.”

So, strength training can help you live longer and better! These findings are encouraging, and we have barely scratched the surface of the complete list of health benefits.

But if you’ve never done it, how does one get started? As always, consult with your healthcare providers first. Next, find someone with professional expertise and experience training older people. It’s important to have professional and experienced coaching to do it safely.



Best wishes for your increased strength, improved function and

By Paul Reilly, CSCS, Owner/President, Accelerated Strength & Balancewell-being!

4 Ways Pets Help Impact Health and Wellness

Daily life across the country has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in times of isolation, relationships – human or animal – are as important as ever before.

According to a survey conducted by the Waltham Petcare Science Institute, 85% of people said interaction with a companion animal helped reduce loneliness and 76% agreed human-animal interactions can help address social isolation. As people are connecting virtually with friends and family, they’re also turning to their pets for comfort and companionship.

As part of its BETTER CITIES FOR PETS program, Mars Petcare collaborates with cities to create more welcoming environments for people and their pets so more people can enjoy the positive impact pets can have on mental health and wellness at home and on the go. Consider these benefits pets provide and learn more at BetterCitiesForPets.com.

1. Pets provide stress relief. Stress management is a key factor to living a happy and healthy life, and these days some people are experiencing more

daily stressors. Research has shown that owning a pet can decrease blood pressure and may help manage both anxiety and depression. No matter what life might throw at you, a pet can be by your side to help you through it.

2. Pets provide comfort. Pets can help soothe people during times of trial, especially as it relates to one’s health. In 2020, Mars Petcare and Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt teamed up to bring a full-time facility dog, Squid, to the hospital to provide comfort and support for patients, their families and hospital staff experiencing the impact of intense medical situations. Squid helps provide insights on how pets like him can improve the lives of



patients and their families.

3. Pets help with healing. Pet ownership can have positive healing ben-

efits at all stages of an owner’s life. Increasing research has been done to show the power of pets in providing health and healing benefits. In fact, one study showed veterans with PTSD symptoms experienced improved levels of physiological stress indicators and lower levels of perceived PTSD symptoms after walking with shelter dogs.

4. Pets combat loneliness. While the pandemic has made it difficult to spend quality time with loved ones, pets can help combat the sense of isolation their owners may feel. In a study by HABRI in collaboration with Mars Petcare, 80% of pet owners said their pets make them feel less lonely, and 89% of people who got a pet for loneliness felt their pet has helped them feel less lonely.



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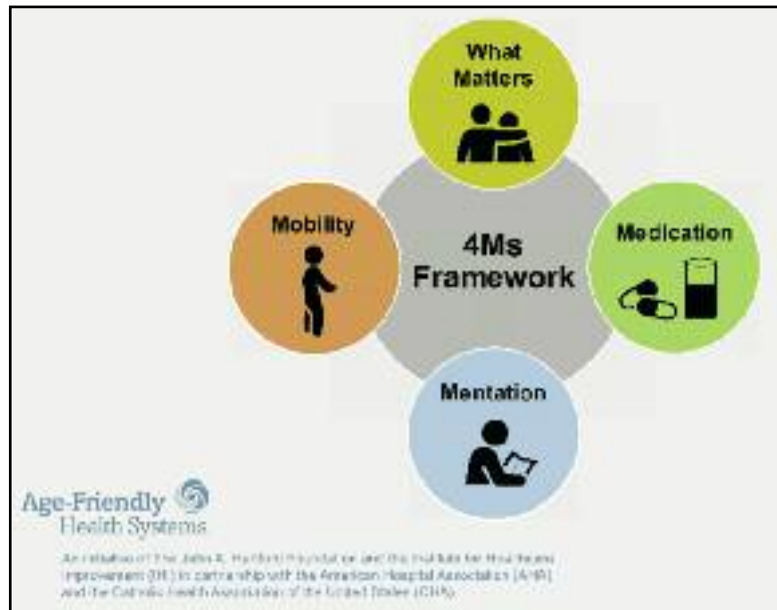
Commit to Getting the Care You Need as You Age

Older adults in America are living longer lives and will outnumber people under the age of 18 by nearly 500,000 by 2034, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

However, living longer does not automatically mean living healthier or happier. In fact, nearly 61% of people in America aged 65 and older live with chronic conditions, according to the National Institutes of Health, and a report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine found nearly 1 in 4 older adults are considered to be socially isolated.

Research published in “Health Affairs” indicates that people who advocate for their own care feel more empowered. The age-friendly health systems approach can help older adults take control of their well-being and demand care that helps them maintain independence by making sure their doctors know their needs and preferences; also called “what matters.”

Just as the name implies, age-friendly care prioritizes what matters most to each individual older adult and helps meet goals such as daily walks around the neighborhood or cooking favorite meals. To get started, consider these four essential elements of age-friendly care from The John A. Hartford Foundation to discuss with your



doctor:

What Matters. As people age, what matters most to them might

change. It is important to share concerns, goals, wishes, needs and experiences with your health care providers. What matters also includes end-of-life care goals and preferences.

Medication. Many older adults take multiple medications, which can cause side effects and, in turn, impact daily living. Honest conversations with doctors about medications, their interactions and side effects can ensure treatment plans are optimizing quality of life.

Mentation. Older adults are at higher risk for dementia, depression and delirium, and conversations with medical providers about changes in memory or mood and annual screenings for dementia and depression can lower the risk.

Mobility. Staying active can help older adults maintain health and independence. Talking to health care providers about mobility concerns can identify personalized tips to improve strength, flexibility and balance.

Healthy aging is possible when the patient and care team are on the same page with the same plan in mind. For ideas on how to start these conversations, visit johnahartford.org/agefriendly.

—Family Features



The Dual Impact Of Brain + Body Exercise

By Lucy Emptage

Does it bother you when you cannot recall a name? Do you have trouble remembering your grocery list? Do you ever forget what you walked into a room to get? These are daily thinking tasks that can become more difficult as we age. But, don't let this get you down!

According to the National Institute on Aging, forgetfulness can be a normal part of aging. As people get older, changes occur in all parts of the body, including the brain.

While this is an admittedly eye-opening fact, there is encouraging research that suggests a unique and easy solution that leaves your mind sharp and your body energized, helping to protect your brain and body as you age. The trick? Working your mind and body at the same time.

Regular exercise combined with brain stimulation can combat cognitive decline, keeping our mind strong as we age into our 50s and well beyond.

The health benefits that exercise brings – better balance and coordination, increased cardiovascular strength, improved sleep and mood, and reduced risk of dementia – are well known. What is becoming more apparent is physical exercise combined with brain exercise can result in greater gains for cognitive function than physical activity or cognitive exercise alone.

A study from the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, showed that those who got regular aerobic exercise had less frequent episodes of not being able to think of a word they wanted to say (or “tip-of-the-tongue episodes”) than similarly aged adults with poorer aerobic health.

The Brain is Like A Muscle ... Use it or Lose It

Alison Weinlaeder, a clinical speech-language pathologist with expertise in treating disorders of language and thinking, warns about websites that claim to improve cognition without also incorporating physical activity.

“More and more research suggests that you could be making even greater gains for your brain's long-term health if you engage in cognitive exercise while you work out your body,” Weinlaeder said.

In other words, protecting brain health across the lifespan means more than just sitting and clicking a mouse or tapping an iPad. The take-home message is simple: engaging in physical and cognitive exercise concurrently helps you age healthily.

These findings, combined with a

desire to empower adults to take control of their cognitive and physical health, inspired Weinlaeder to create an innovative new home fitness program called Cardiomelon that pairs 20-30 minute long cardiovascular workouts with thinking tasks to engage the brain and body with one fitness tool. While there are countless home programs out there designed to keep your body healthy, Weinlaeder saw that there was no program with the dual purpose of brain and body fitness.

“We've seen a tremendous response to our online program since so many people are at home more now due to COVID-19,” Weinlaeder said. “It is important we continue to find ways to keep our brains and bodies active during social distancing. Do a puzzle, play a new board game, or go for a walk outside. Or, why not reap even greater benefits by doing thinking and physical exercises in tandem?”

Exercising the Brain + Body at the Same Time

How does one do this? Unless you have some super talent I haven't discovered, playing a new board game while going for a walk outside is next to impossible.

Enter Cardiomelon. Designed specifically for adults over 50, Cardiomelon workouts combine physical and cognitive exercises all into one fun workout. Experienced trainers offer plenty of modifications for users who have mobility issues.

To give some examples of what a typical workout entails, you may be asked to:

- name U.S. states starting with the letter “M” while doing crunches
- do simple math while strengthening the upper body with modified pushups, or
- recall a word list while you complete exercises to get your heart rate up and challenge your balance such as squats, alternating knee lifts, toe touches, mountain climbers, planks, and standing hamstring curls.

Aging is something to be celebrated and embraced, and successful aging shouldn't be restricted by access.

Cardiomelon workouts are an easy-to-view and affordable way to improve your cardiovascular health while challenging your language, memory, and thinking skills from the comfort of home.

To learn more and try out a Cardiomelon workout for free visit www.cardiomelon.com. Memberships start at \$10/month.

sports

Dallas quarterback looks to 'God's plan' after season-ending injury



The NFL season ended early for Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott after a devastating injury. However, he hasn't lost the positive attitude and faith in God that have contributed to his success.

A smiling and upbeat Prescott recorded an Instagram video on Oct. 15 updating Dallas fans on his health, saying he is "excited for God's purpose and God's plan."

"I know it's bigger than anything that I see or could have imagined. But I'm trusting Him," Prescott said. "My faith is doubled down more than ever, and I'm thankful that He's my Savior and He guides me in life, so I know through Him, all of this will be possible and all this will be a great comeback and a great story."

Prescott recorded the video while he was on his way to a medical checkup, post-surgery. He said he's "doing well" and in "great spirits" after the injury and surgery.

I can't thank you enough for all your love, your support, your prayers over the last few days," he

said. "They've been more than overwhelming – from teammates to family, to friends, to fans I don't know, to former and current players around the league, and players around all sports, I just want to say thank you. They're definitely appreciated and received well, so just know that that much love and support out there makes a huge difference.

"I'm just ready to start this road to a comeback. I know .. this little adversity is just going to be another chapter in the book. I'm excited to move forward and write it. I just, once again, can't thank you all enough for your love and your support through it all. But I'm in great spirits. I'm gonna stay that way. I'm looking forward to this football season – seeing the game in a different perspective and supporting my teammates and those around the league that need it. I'm ready to get this journey of the comeback started. God bless you all."

American sports, role models and culture

Nearly 30 years ago, in a 1993 Nike commercial, professional basketball legend Charles Barkley fired the first shot at the "role model" concept popularized by Columbia University sociologist Robert K. Merton in the aftermath of the 1960s counterculture movement. "I am not a role model," Barkley proclaimed in the half-minute spot. "I'm not paid to be a role model. I'm paid to wreak havoc on the basketball court. Parents should be role models. Just because I dunk a basketball doesn't mean I should raise your kids."

Barkley's words landed with a force every bit the equal of former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick's National Anthem knee 23 years later. Former Vice President Dan Quayle defended Barkley, while Barkley's fellow NBA superstar Karl Malone criticized him in *Sports Illustrated*. Leading news magazines, including *Time* and *Newsweek*, published articles exploring the controversy. Newspaper columnists from coast to coast—on and off the sports pages—also weighed in. The topic still sparks debate today.

Of the many phrases and concepts Merton coined—including "self-fulfilling prophecy" and "unintended consequences"—"role model" has had the most impact. On the surface, the argument that young people tend to model their behavior after high-profile, successful adults is harmless. However, in retrospect, the elevation of athletes and other celebrities as primary figures in the formation of behavioral norms for young people helped create the conditions that are powering the destructive Black Lives Matter movement today.

Merton's role model concept undercuts the importance of parents and nuclear families. That was the point of Barkley's criticism. Feminists and other progressive critics of America's "patriarchal" society—including the Black Lives Matter movement, whose Marxist-influenced statement of purpose opposes "the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure"—have used Merton's concept to great effect. Muhammad Ali, Pete Rose, Farrah Fawcett, Barbara Streisand, Mick Jagger, Marvin Gaye, and Burt Reynolds infringed on territory primarily reserved for mom, dad, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and teachers.

Technology has helped advance the process, diminishing the influence of traditional authority figures and strengthening the reach of celebrities. Kids shut their bedroom doors, turn on their televisions, laptops, and game consoles, plug in earbuds, open social media apps, and disappear into a world far removed from mom and dad. With a mere push of a button they tune out the worldview of their families and tune in the worldview of athlete LeBron James, actress Lena Dunham, rapper Snoop Dogg, social media race-baiter Shaun King, and others like them.

On top of all this, we now see America's enemies, particularly China, using these modern role models to promote racial division and destabilize our country—with those on the political Left as their accomplices. Today, they have coalesced around the Black Lives Matter movement to push America toward a level of racial dysfunction and animus not experienced since the Civil War.

It's fitting that Charles Barkley fired the



first shot against this trend, because American sports have become the Gettysburg of what some have called our "cold civil war." And if China and the Left complete their radicalization of sports, our nation may never recover.

Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.

Nelson Mandela spoke those words in an effort to heal the country he came to lead after spending a quarter century incarcerated for opposing apartheid. Mandela embraced sports' power to bridge racial divides, looking on athletic competition as a kind of antibiotic for racial animus and discrimination. South Africa's victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup and Mandela's presentation of the Webb Ellis Cup to team captain Francois Pienaar stand as an iconic symbol of unity in post-apartheid South Africa. Clint Eastwood directed a movie, *Invictus*, starring Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon, that memorialized the importance of the moment. It bears re-watching today.

Since sprinter Jesse Owens won four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics and boxer Joe Louis scored a first-round knockout over German heavyweight Max Schmeling in 1938, sports have served as a powerful racial unifier in America as well. The victories earned by Owens and Louis punctured Hitler's Aryan superiority myth, unified black and white Americans in celebration, and established Owens and Louis as this country's first black national heroes.

Owens and Louis laid the foundation for Brooklyn Dodgers General Manager Branch Rickey's partnership with Jackie Robinson to integrate our national pastime, Major League Baseball, a decade later. Robinson's successful integration of baseball, in turn, inspired Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s.

Indeed, Barack Obama, America's first black president—the world's first black leader of a predominantly white country—credited Robinson's career for his own political rise. "There's a direct line between Jackie Robinson and me standing here," Obama said in January 2017, while hosting the world champion Chicago Cubs at the White House. He continued:

There's a direct line between people loving Ernie Banks, and then the city being able to come together and work together in one spirit. . . . Sometimes it's

just a matter of us being able to escape and relax from the difficulties of our days, but sometimes it also speaks to something better in us. And when you see this group of folks of different shades and different backgrounds, and coming from different communities and neighborhoods all across the country, and then playing as one team and playing the right way, and celebrating each other and being joyous in that, that tells us a little something about what America is and what America can be.

Yes, America is a shining example of sports' transformative power. The games we play, the games at the center of our social behavior, combine with our founding principles to enhance the American experience. America's enemies know this, which is why the culture war has moved to our arenas and stadiums. Sports are now in the same crosshairs as our Founding Fathers, under attack for past racial sins and unappreciated for their vital role in cultivating racial unity. Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, but by writing the Declaration of Independence he made the emancipation of slaves inevitable. American sports were once segregated, but no American industry can match sports' empowerment of black men.

The black-player-dominated National Football League is the most powerful force in American popular culture. It provides the number one television show on five different networks—CBS, FOX, NBC, ESPN, and the NFL Network. In this era of have-it-your-way TV, where consumers record and watch shows when they want while fast-forwarding through advertisements, only live sporting events can be consistently counted on to deliver audiences that sit through commercials.

But while American sports have never been more influential, they've also never been more vulnerable to foreign influence. Their partnership with global brands and their desire to build global audiences have given foreign countries a pathway to manipulate American sports and culture.

Look at how China, with its 1.4 billion consumers, rules the National Basketball Association and its de facto parent company, Nike, the same way it rules Hollywood. Access to China's consumers and Asia's cheap labor (even sometimes slave labor) is the key to Nike's economic growth. The Portland-based shoe and apparel manufacturer generates \$40 billion a year in revenue. Its global reach, agenda, and revenue streams dictate the strategy of the \$8-billion-a-year NBA. Many are unaware that Nike, and not the NBA, controls basketball. One could

■ Please see SPORTS page 23

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How to Create Your Own DIY Dream Closet

Creating the closet of your dreams could be in closer reach than you may think if you're willing to take matters into your own hands. With a little creative inspiration and some basic DIY skills, you may be surprised by the stylish space you can design by yourself.

Start with a vision

Creating the perfect closet space begins with your ideas. Think about the details such as how you want the space to look and the amount and type of storage you need. Envision everything from colors and finishes to the physical shape.

Once you've dreamed up your ideal closet, compare your ideas with the space you have available and adjust your plans to fit your footprint and budget. This step allows you to get creative with ways to maximize your space and use every available inch to create a closet that gives you the function and aesthetic you desire.



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An envy-worthy closet isn't just a stunning space, it integrates functional elements so seamlessly that they blend right into the design. When it comes to storage, a stylish and easy-to-assemble system like ClosetMaid's SuiteSymphony balances form and function in almost any space. This tower-based closet system, which can be a perfect option for projects on tighter budgets, combines multiple tower sizes and corner units to create a completely custom DIY closet system. The system also accommodates a wide range of accessories for more customization such as stylish doors and drawers, angled shoe shelves, jewelry trays and tie and belt racks.

Pay attention to details

It's not just the structure that can bring your dream closet to life; little touches can add up in a big way. Upgrade your light fixture, for example, and look for other ways to personalize the space for a look that's all yours, such as shelving to display treasured photos or keepsakes, or a spot on the wall for a vision board to draw inspiration from as you begin each day.

Keep color in mind

Introduce light and personality into your closet with rich color and style. Add accent color on the walls behind your clothes or incorporate color with the structural elements. For example, the SuiteSymphony line offers several color options, including on-trend finishes like Graphite Grey and Midnight Brown.

Find more inspiration for creating your dream closet yourself at closetmaid.com/suitesymphony.

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SPORTS

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make a fair argument that the NBA is nothing more than the in-house marketing department of Nike.

Both Nike and the NBA kowtow to China, which explains their silence on the horrific human rights abuses inside China and the suppression of Hong Kong freedom fighters by China's communist government. More important, Nike and the NBA's China agenda helps explain why Nike pitchmen LeBron James and Colin Kaepernick enthusiastically smear the United States as inherently racist and evil. From Joseph Stalin to Fidel Castro to our own time, the communists' favorite propaganda tactic has been to paint the West, and the U.S. in particular, as racist.

The militant social justice messaging of James and Kaepernick serves the interests of not only the Chinese Communist Party and globalist corporations like Nike, but also our political Left. Kaepernick's National Anthem defiance in 2016 gave the Left an opportunity to politicize football, America's new national pastime, and force it into the kind of "progressive" posturing already commonplace in the NBA and Hollywood. Arrogance, lack of foresight, and the advice of an inner circle that included former Clinton administration press secretary Joe Lockhart as the NFL's vice president of communications, explain commissioner Roger Goodell's laissez-faire approach to Kaepernick's protest. Underestimating the determination of the Left and the power of social media to intimidate corporate America, Goodell and the NFL's TV partners wrongly thought that the Kaepernick controversy would fade over time.

Instead, four years after Kaepernick first knelt, the Leftist mob has forced the National Football League, Major League Baseball, the National Hockey League, and the National Basketball Association to take their own knees and pay homage to the dishonest Black Lives Matter narrative on police brutality. The NFL plans to paint social justice messages across its end zones this season and to allow players to wear helmet decals with the names of alleged police victims. The San Francisco 49ers fly a BLM flag next to an American flag at Levi's Stadium. MLB opened its COVID-shortened season with "BLM" carved into pitcher's mounds, and the Boston Red Sox put up a 254-foot BLM billboard outside Fenway Park. NHL players are now regularly kneeling during the National Anthem. The NBA's basketball bubble at Disney World is a virtual shrine to BLM: "Black Lives Matter" is painted on the court, players wear social justice messages on the back of their jerseys, and it's major news when a player stands during the National Anthem.

The entire American sports world—a culture that traditionally celebrates victors, meritocracy, colorblindness, and patriotism—has suddenly immersed itself in black victimization and left-wing radicalism. This immersion threatens to do permanent damage to American culture as a whole. It has certainly undermined national pride. A country that no longer believes in its founding ideals cannot prosper and survive.

If our sports stadiums and arenas have become the Gettysburg of the culture war, LeBron James and Colin Kaepernick are playing the roles of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, fighting to divide the nation even further than it is. The main-

stream media is only half right in casting them as modern-day equivalents of Muhammad Ali. Ali's religious sect, the Nation of Islam, was certainly divisive: it championed black secession. But unlike the BLM movement, it also rejected victimhood. Its founder Elijah Muhammad and its spokesman Malcolm X promoted bootstrap self-reliance and were disdainful of liberal politics. "The worst enemy that the Negro [has]," said Malcolm X,

is this white man that runs around here drooling at the mouth professing to love Negroes and calling himself a liberal. It is following these white liberals that has perpetuated problems that Negroes have. If the Negro wasn't taken, tricked or deceived by the white liberal, then Negroes would get together and solve our own problems. I only cite these things to show you that in America, the history of the white liberal has been nothing but a series of trickery designed to make Negroes think that the white liberal was going to solve our problems.

Pro-BLM athletes today have moved beyond the idea of a role model that was debated in 1993—the idea of modeling behavior to be imitated, such as self-reliance, hard work, responsibility, and good parenthood. Through the power of social media, to which they are addicted, these modern role models exert influence by promoting commercial products and political causes. In the case of NBA athletes like LeBron James, this means turning their backs not only on the oppressed people of China and Hong Kong, but also on the poor and underprivileged in America among whom so many of these wealthy athletes grew up, and who they now condemn to victimhood and dependency with their political activism.

Charles Barkley was right 30 years ago. Parents, not athletes, should be role models. Today the situation is even worse, with sports further dividing an already dangerously divided nation, rather than providing the unifying and even healing force Nelson Mandela described. Predictably, there are now calls to boycott sports, and it seems inevitable that the TV ratings of the pro sports leagues will decline. This is unlikely to matter, however, to the suddenly-woke billionaire team owners and their handpicked commissioners.

As fans, we can only hope and pray that these feckless leaders will reconsider their embrace of the BLM cult—a necessary first step to returning American sports to what it has been in the past: a force for unity and a model of a diverse and colorblind meritocracy.

—Jason Whitlock. Jason is a sports columnist for *Outkick.com*, a TV and radio host, and a podcaster. A graduate of Ball State University, where he was a football letterman, he worked as a sportswriter at *The Kansas City Star* from 1994 to 2010. He has also worked for *ESPN*, *AOL Sports*, and *Fox Sports*. In 2007, he became the first sportswriter to win the *Scripps Howard National Journalism Award for Commentary*. He founded *ESPN's "The Undeclared"* website and helped create and host "Speak for Yourself" on *FOX Sports 1*.

This essay is adapted from a Hillsdale College online lecture delivered in Nashville, Tennessee, on August 19, 2020.

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Trump heralds peace deal between Israel and Sudan

After months of negotiations lead by the United States, Sudan has agreed to normalize ties with Israel and "agreed to make peace," announced U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday.

The move follows the White House announcement that Trump has informed Congress of his intent to remove Sudan from the U.S. list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, following Khartoum's agreement to pay \$335 million in compensation to victims of the Al-Qaeda attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, and on the destroyer USS Cole in 2000—attacks that American courts have ruled Sudan aided and abetted. The payment is a diplomatic win for the Trump administration and victims of terror after efforts by presidents Bill Clinton, George Bush and Barack Obama all failed.

"We are expanding the circle of peace so rapidly. ... This truly changes the region. It changes the lives of all our people for the better," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Trump by phone on Friday as Trump was surrounded by administration members, including U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and senior adviser Jared Kushner.

Also on the phone was Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

Kushner said the agreement will help reduce extremism, terrorism and anti-Semitism, noting that "these peace agreements are not as easy as President Trump and his team are making them look," he said.

A joint statement by the three nations "agreed to the normalization of relations between Sudan and Israel and to end the state of belligerence between their nations."

"In addition, the leaders agreed to begin economic and trade relations, with an initial focus on agriculture," continued the statement. "The leaders also agreed that delegations will meet in the coming weeks to negotiate agreements of cooperation in those areas as well as in agriculture technology, aviation, migration issues and other areas for the benefit of the two peoples."

It also stated that they "resolved to work together to build a better future and advance the cause of peace in the region. This move will improve regional security and unlock new opportunities for the people of Sudan, Israel, the Middle East and Africa."

Sudan follows the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which normalized ties with Israel through signing the Abraham Accords on Sept. 15 in a White House ceremony. The two Gulf states were the first to normalize relations with the Jewish state. Jordan and Egypt made peace with Israel in 1994 and 1979, respectively.

Sudan cannot receive foreign aid



until it is removed from the U.S. list of terrorism list, which it has been on since 1993 for allegedly granting refuge and assistance to the U.S.-designated terrorist group Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorists.

The Sudanese military overthrew the 10-year dictatorship of former leader Omar al-Bashir in April 2019. A mixed military-civilian government currently rules the country until possible elections in 2022.

Sudan, an Arab-Muslim-majority country that borders Egypt to the south, has long been viewed as a hostile nation towards the Jewish state. Its rejection of Israel was made

famous with the 1967 Khartoum Resolution, issued at the conclusion of the Arab League summit in the wake of the Six-Day War and declaring the "Three Nos": no peace, no recognition, no negotiations.

However, the new government, keen on reforming the economy and expand international investment, sees friendlier ties with Israel as a step in improving relations with the United States. Sudan's western neighbor, Chad, established ties with Israel in 2019, and South Sudan, which gained independence from Sudan in 2011, also has diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

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