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SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL Page 13

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NEW RESIDENT churchguide

Bethel Baptist Church

See Inside Back Cover!

Where Do You Go for Help in Times of Trouble?

By **Clint Decker**

The President of the United States, along with other world leaders, were facing the threat of losing millions of lives at the hands of General Zod. The scene is from the 1980 film, Superman. In a desperate plea on national television, the President called for help, *"Superman! Can you hear me? Superman! Where are you..."*

The fictional movie portrays what all of us do when facing a crisis. After accepting the reality of our situation, we look for help from somewhere, and it usually comes from within and without. Within, is that inner strength, wisdom and perseverance that is summoned. It is that drive to push us through the trouble we are facing. Without, are those places we go beyond ourselves, where we contact friends, family, or our community (like Superman!).

In times of crisis, we often seek help everywhere but one – God. He typically is not reached out to

■ Please see HELP page 2

Sole Reason turns used sneakers into new for local kids

Over the last 10 years Sole Reason has served Topeka youth by providing new sneakers to youth in need. Since 2016 the organization has provided over 11,000 pairs and counting.

"Our motto has always been 'showing the love of Christ through a simple pair of sneakers as we put sneakers on their feet and smiles on their faces,'" said Jerry Hudgins, Director of the organization.

What most people don't realize is that the organization also has a used footwear program that is used to provide more NEW sneakers. The shoes are collected through collection boxes placed at local

■ Please see SNEAKERS page 2

KC Renaissance Festival Launches 50th Season

The Kansas City Renaissance Festival officially began its Golden 50th Season celebration with the spectacular Coronation of King Henry VIII and Queen Catherine of Aragon, marking the start of a milestone season honoring five decades of unforgettable memories, immersive entertainment, and timeless traditions.

As the Festival celebrates its Golden 50th Season, guests can look forward to an exciting year

■ Please see RENFEST page 3

New Catholic Church Under Construction in North Topeka

by **Lorraine Jessepe**

The Mother Teresa of Calcutta Catholic Church in Topeka began in 2004 with a vision for three phases of growth.

Jenny VanLeeuwen, Parish Life Coordinator, said the current original building, located at 2014 N.W. 46th St., was actually designed to be a gym. The building has served the first initial phases of growth, housing space for religious education classes and holding the parish's church services, but is missing many of the features found in a Catholic church.

After more than 20 years of private contributions and fundraising, the Church, currently under the leadership of Father Thomas Aduri, held a groundbreaking ceremony for the new permanent church in August of 2025, the culmination of the parish's initial

■ Please see CHURCH page 3

Dolly Parton, Country Music Legend, Dies at 80

Dolly Parton, the country music giant whose songs, Christian faith and generosity reached far beyond Nashville, died Tuesday in Nashville, her family announced. She was 80.

Her nephew, Bryan Seaver, disclosed the death in an Instagram video. Parton had spoken about ongoing health problems. It has since been learned she had cancer.

Seaver identified her as "Dolly Rebecca Parton Dean," his aunt, known in the family as Sister, Sis, Granny and Gigi. He said Parton had asked him years ago to make the announcement. Seaver served as her head of security for more than two decades.

"Sadness lies with us, not with Dolly," Seaver said. "Dolly has lived in the light and is in the arms of Jesus," where he said she would be met by her husband, Carl Dean, her parents and others who died before her.

Fans often spoke of Parton's kindness as much as her music. Canadian fan Tyneal Buchanan, who traveled to Nashville for Parton's 80th birthday in January, told WTVF she had loved Parton all her life.

"I just think she's an incredible human," Buchanan said. "She's so caring and giving, and kind, talented."

In a previous Metro Voice story, Parton had stated, "faith impacts everything I do."

Parton, one of 12 children raised in rural East Tennessee, began singing in the Pentecostal church where her grandfather preached. She went on to write an estimated 3,000 songs, including "Jolene," "Coat of Many Colors" and "I Will Always Love You." She sold more than 100 million records and won 11 Grammy Awards.

Seaver said Parton "opened doors" for her family and generations of dreamers. Then he shared one last detail. After a lifetime in heavy rhinestones, Parton told him she wanted to rest in "a beautiful bed of plush cotton."

"Rest in peace, Aunt Dolly," he said. "She will always love you."

HELP

continued from page 1

at all, or is the last option. God invites us to live differently. Read the words from the Bible, *"I lift up my eyes to the hills."* (Psalm 121:1A) The writer is referring to the city of Jerusalem, which sat upon an elevated, mountainous, hilly area. It was known as the city of God, where God lived among His chosen people. Consequently, it was always a city that people lifted their eyes up to in times of trouble.

When a resident of Jerusalem or of Israel was far away, he always knew what direction Jerusalem was. It was something he could see, without seeing. And when he would set his face toward Jerusalem, desire for it grew and inspired hope no matter the crisis.

Did aide and protection come through a city made of brick and mortar by the hands of mere men? No. A city cannot travel with someone, and it only offers limited help. A city's edifices have the potential to crumble from an earthquake or be destroyed by an enemy. This is not referring to a city, but rather, to the One who dwells within that glorious city. The Scripture says, *"My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."* (Ps. 121:2)

When Jesus died and rose again, no longer were people limited to access God through a single temple, in a single city. For when Christ arose, He made a way for every soul that turns from their sin and trusts in Him by faith, to be a living temple. A temple where God's Holy Spirit would take up residence and dwell within them. Then as we walk through life, we know Almighty God lives both in heaven and ever-present within our heart. Therefore, we can lift our eyes toward the heavens, bow humbly on the ground or just walk confidently on our way, knowing that our help comes from the Savior, who made the heavens and the earth.

The Bible also questions, "*From where does help come?"* (Ps. 121:1B) It is communicating about the weakness within us and the things of this world. The aid, support and protection we need is limited if we rely solely upon ourselves. We are limited in knowledge, strength and morality due to our own corruption from personal sin, and the same regarding the things of this world. What should we do in challenging times? Set our eyes on the one true God, where our source of protection, wisdom and power comes from.

When you need help, where do you go? Do you trust in yourself or others? Choose to follow Christ and place all your trust in Him. He is sufficient for all your needs.

A prayer for you - Lord God, am I looking to other places for help besides you? My own knowledge and wisdom? Others? I confess my negligence in not coming to you first. I repent and turn to you. I seek you with all my heart. Change me O, God. In Jesus' name. Amen.

–Clint Decker is President of Great Awakenings. Please share your comment at cdecker@greatawakenings.org and follow his blog at clintdecker.blogspot.com.

SNEAKERS

continued from page 1

businesses.

"We collect any type of used footwear, including sneakers, dress, shoes, cleats, boots, or any other type as long as it's a pair and as long as there are no tears. Every few months, a company from Florida comes by and picks them up, cleans them and ships them off to a Third World country where families sell them for a few cents – enough to feed their families," Hudgins explained.

"We receive a check based on the total weight, which we use to run our program and purchase more new sneakers for kids in our area – so it's a win-win for everyone."

Sole Reason is currently looking to partner with more businesses, churches, and organizations in the Topeka area to help more kids. If you're interested in supporting the program with a collection box at your location, go to www.solereason.net. The website also lists collection boxes near you if you want to contribute a pair of shoes to the program.

Another way to support the program is by sponsoring their events: a golf tournament, a 5K, a bowling tournament, and a possible frisbee golf or poker run.

Sole Reason
#sneakersandsmiles

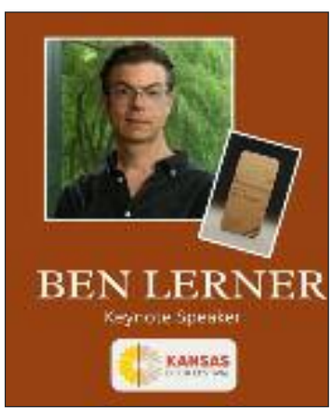
Your used footwear, their NEW sneakers! Please donate your used footwear to help us contiune to put sneakers on their feet and smiles on their faces. Call 785-338-6170 to have your used footwear picked up or see our website for local places to drop them off sites.
www.Solereason.net

5+2

Kansas Book Festival Returns to WU

The 15th annual Kansas Book Festival will occur Saturday, September 26 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., hosted by the Washburn University Library in Topeka. The festival welcomes prominent authors from all genres including nonfiction, fiction, picture books, young adult novels, and poetry. Attendees can enjoy panel presentations, music performances, food trucks, children's activities, and exhibitor tents with publishers from around the region.

At this year's festival, keynote speaker Ben Lerner — a poet, novelist, critic, and Topeka native — will discuss his latest work Transcription, named a Best Book of the Year by The New York Times. The recipient of fellowships from the Fulbright, Guggenheim, and MacArthur Foundations, Lerner's work has been a finalist for the National Book Award for Poetry, the National Book Critics Circle Award in fiction, and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Moderator: Washburn Professor of English Eric McHenry.



Several other notable authors will also join the festival lineup, and the festival features a wide range of storytellers with compelling voices, including Huascar Medina and Linzi Garcia.

Parents and young attendees can look forward to a variety of engaging entertainment. The children's area will feature hands-on activities, and good trucks will be on hand.

For more information visit Kansas Book Festival on Facebook.

The Kansas Book Festival is free and open to guests of all ages. Refer to the official Festival website for announcements of attending authors and other important details: www.kansasbookfestival.com.

C5 Luncheon to feature Shawnee Heights Coach

The September C5Alive POWER Luncheon will be held on the 10th at 11:30am at the Celtic Fox.

The program will feature Chad Parks, a wrestling coach, teacher and strength training specialist. He is also a renowned speaker who has dedicated his life to inspiring others to reach their fullest potential through life in Jesus. Chad and his wife Laurie reside in Topeka, KS with their four children. He is involved in various ministries throughout the greater Topeka area, such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Young Life and Wrestlers for Christ.

Parks

Admission is free, and lunch can be ordered on site if desired. RSVPs and inquiries can be sent to info@C5Alive.org.

"POWER" luncheons are held the 2nd Thursday each month and are open to the public. C5Alive is dedicated to Creating Christian Culture in the Capital City, by developing and uniting leaders in community businesses, non-profits and churches.

Upcoming luncheon dates are Sep. 10, Oct. 8, Nov. 12, and Dec. 10. Coming up on September 10 will Chad Parks, Shawnee Heights award-winning wrestling coach, also involved in football coaching & FCA

C5 also hosts other events, including EASTERFEST, the annual Topeka Easter Fun Fair, and also Topeka Fall Fest (Oct. 10), both held in NOTO Arts District.

C5 members also sponsor luncheons and other events as a way to promote their organizations.

C5 is currently holding a membership drive with special incentives for new members. Lower-priced memberships for Individuals and home-based businesses are now available. A list of current members and more information is available on the website at www.C5Alive.org, at www.facebook.com/C5Alive, or by calling Lee at 785-640-6399.

CHURCH

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vision in 2004, when the parish first started. Construction began in the Fall of 2025.

The tentative completion date for the new church is March 2027, Vanleeuwen said, and the old building will continue to be used as a multipurpose center. According to the Church website, the archdiocese signed the construction contract with KBS Constructors on October 1, 2025. The website lists cost of construction of the new building at $9.8 million.

"We are pleased with the progress of our church, our dedicated worship space," said VanLeeuwen.

The new church will house an Adoration Chapel available for prayer 24/7. It will also house a choir loft. Other features may also include decorative paintings, stained glass windows and more parking space, VanLeeuwen said. Seating capacity in the new church will be around 500.

"We are very excited to have a sacred place where the faithful can praise and worship God and receive the sacraments," VanLeeuwen said.

Holy Smokin' Jamboree

Mother Teresa's signature event, the Holy Smokin' Jamboree, is set this year for September 12th and 13th. Events – including the pancake feed, car show, raffles, silent & live auctions, and craft show – will still be held on the church grounds, where it began in 2007, with a few differences, VanLeeuwen said.

The children's area will be in back of the old building, and bingo and the cake walk will be held inside in air-conditioned comfort.

Other events include a Pancake Feed, Cornhole Tournament, Car Show, 5K Run, Raffles, Live Music and a Sunday Outdoor Mass. For more information and registration, visit Holysmokinjamboree.org.

RENFEST

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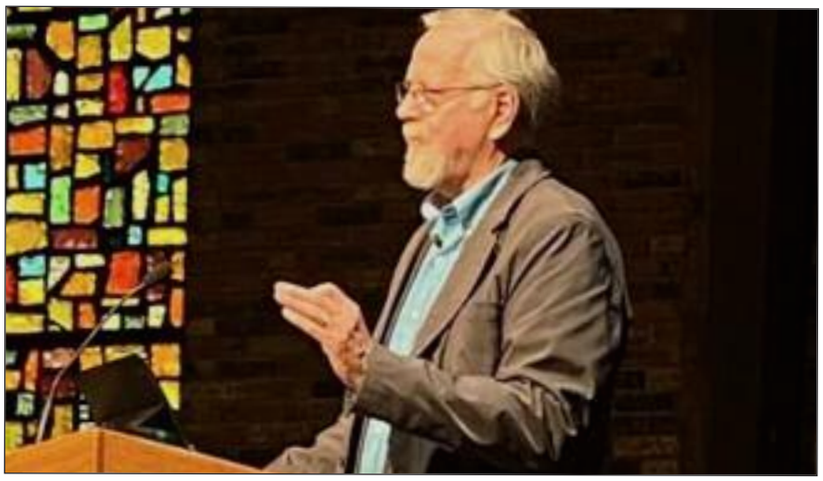
filled with beloved traditions, new experiences, outstanding entertainment, artisan shopping, delicious food, and immersive adventures for the entire family.

The Kansas City Renaissance Festival opens September 5 in Bonner Springs, Kansas.

For more festival information and tickets, visit the website at www.kcrenfest.com.

How an Interim Pastor Guides a Church Through Transition



When Pastor Bob Evans first stepped into Westbrooke Church, he wasn't there to take over. He knew his role was temporary. As an interim pastor, his goal was to guide the Overland Park congregation through a transition and prepare it for the permanent leader who would follow.

This process of finding a new pastor isn't unique. Lifeway Research found that 56% of protestant churches did not have their current pastor 10 years previously. When the time comes, many churches immediately begin searching for the next pastor after one leaves. But bringing on an interim pastor slows down the pace, allowing ample time for the church to evaluate its health, address unresolved issues, and thoughtfully plan for its next chapter.

A New Role after Retirement

Evans' work in ministry began over 50 years ago, first as an assistant pastor in 1975, then a lead pastor five years later. Since then, he has pastored four different churches across three states. In 1995, he and his wife moved to Brainerd, Minn., where they still live today.

Evans retired from full-time pastoring in 2017. The following year, he got involved with Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM).

"I remember one guy in particular who had been a sort of mentor figure in my early pastoral days," Evans recalls. "I noticed that he was changing locations every year or year and a half or so. And I dug into it and found out that he was working as an interim pastor."

Learning about that role inspired the retired pastor, and he felt God calling him to the position. "I loved the idea [that there] still might be a continuing purpose for me and a way that I can be helpful to churches, even in my post-retirement years. And that was exciting to me."

From First Steps to the Next Pastor

Westbrooke is now the sixth church Evans has served since he received training through IPM. Through his previous experience, he has gained valuable knowledge about leading a church through a transition, both relational and organizational.

An interim pastor typically stays with a church for around 12-18 months, but the length varies depending on the church's needs. Evans shares that his shortest placement was around nine months, and his longest was 22 months.

Each pastor generally follows the same five-stage process: connection, evaluation, addressing needs, strategic planning, and pastor search.

The connection stage focuses on developing relationships with the congregation through conversations and listening to individual concerns. In Evans' time at Westbrooke so far, he has spent over 120 hours doing one-on-one "listening interviews."

For stage two, IPM provides what they call a "Ministry Insight Tool," a survey sent out to the congregation about the church's health in many different areas. The interim pastor, along with a team of volunteers, then uses the results to guide his next steps.

"We have lots of information about where the church is," Evans explains. "What the concerns are, what we're really doing well, where the deep wells of strength and resilience are found within the church, what are some of the issues that we can actually fix during a relatively short period of time."

After the strengths and weaknesses are assessed, the interim pastor begins to implement changes. This stage looks very different depending on the individual needs of the church.

Evans says stage four, strategic planning, is very important. "The church asks and answers questions through the transition team," he says. "What are our core beliefs? What are our core values? What is our mission? What is the unique purpose that God has given us?"

Once those questions are answered, the interim pastor and other church leaders will come up with a clear strategy with short- and long-term goals.

Finally, an interim pastor begins to phase out his leadership as the church enters stage five, searching for the next full-time pastor.

"When we get to that phase," Evans says, "the interim pastor begins to shift his role and becomes more of a coach in that process rather than a leader."

A Different Kind of Interim

While interim pastors from IPM take on a more involved role in evaluating needs and implementing changes, others primarily serve to "supply the pulpit" and bring stability during a pastoral transition.

Howard Cordell, Executive Director of Midwest Ministers Fellowship based in Blue Springs, Mo., works with these types of interim pastors.

"We have a board of 13 guys who are all pastors," Cordell says. "These guys are pastors that love the church, that have enough experience to know the pain of what it is to go through change."

The pastors involved with the fellowship can serve a few different roles in the churches they are sent to. Often they are there just to fill the Sunday morning preaching role, but other times they help with the search for a new pastor.

Midwest Ministers Fellowship is connected with over 200 churches across Missouri and Kansas, ranging in size and denomination. Cordell shares that churches of all kinds have taken on interim pastors, but that there are certain factors that make it more likely.

"It depends on the history and the culture of your church," he says. "Some churches have a congregational vote, which would require finding more than one candidate."

Size also plays a role. "A larger church, because they're pretty well-situated, probably isn't gonna be in that big of a hurry. So they're gonna slow down the process a little bit… a smaller church probably needs somebody pretty fast."

Cordell believes that not every church would benefit from an interim pastor. Churches with a large staff and congregation, he says, may rely on their own church members to fill the pulpit during a transition period.

Although the interim pastors from Midwest Ministers Fellowship look a little different, they share similar goals to those of Evans.

Challenges and Success

When an interim pastor from IPM works with a new church, there are often challenges to overcome. These can range from structural and organizational problems to issues within the congregation.

Evans describes the biggest challenges he has faced. "Dysfunctional systems and relationships and people, historical trauma in congregations, overcoming division and mistrust, all of those kinds of things."

In the end, Evans defines a successful interim pastor placement as a congregation flourishing under the pastor who has been called to the church. He shares that he keeps up with his previous churches on social media and loves to see their leaders still thriving.

No matter where Evans is serving, his ultimate goal as an interim pastor is to help them "focus and utilize their energies efficiently in pursuit of the mission and the purpose that God has called them to."

–Lyra Thompson | Metro Voice

Why you need dental insurance in retirement.

Medicare doesn't pay for dental care.[1]
That's right. As good as Medicare is, it was never meant to cover everything. That means if you want protection, you need to purchase individual insurance.

Early detection can prevent small problems from becoming expensive ones.
The best way to prevent large dental bills is preventive care. The American Dental Association recommends checkups twice a year.

Previous dental work can wear out.
Your odds of having a dental problem only go up as you age.[2]

Treatment is expensive — especially the services people over 50 often need.
Unexpected bills like $299 for a filling ... $1,471 for a crown[3] can be a real burden, especially if you're on a fixed income.

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[1] "Medicare & You," Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, 2025. [2] "Aging changes in teeth and gums", medlineplus.gov, 4/17/2022. [3] FairHealth, Inc. National average dental fees. Data current as of July 2025; subject to change.

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SCAN ME!

Faith in the Classroom: How Christian teachers in public schools live out their faith in a secular setting

One struggling 6th-grade student was uncomfortable and cried frequently. She told people she couldn't speak English when she could, and she had missed more than 40 days of school every year.

But when Mollie Owen, the school's interventionist, worked with the student, she began to see change. The girl started opening up to other students and teachers. She was generally happier. By the second semester, she had missed only two days.

A year later, the girl saw Owen again and hugged her. That was one of the first times she had ever initiated contact with anyone.

Moments like that remind Mollie Owen why she teaches. They also illustrate how her Christian faith shapes the way she approaches students.

Like Owen, Christian teachers working in public schools walk a careful line. They can't openly evangelize, but they also don't leave their faith at the door. They live out their beliefs through their character, the values they instill in students, how they handle conflicts and by being the kind of teachers students feel safe around.

A Calling to Teach

Mollie Owen always knew she wanted to be a teacher. Ever since she declared her career choice in kindergarten, her goals have never changed. Owen is a former sixth-grade teacher in the Turner, Kan. school district, and she now works with pre-K to fifth-grade teachers at the district office in Spring Hill, Kan.

Mike Mitchell followed in the footsteps of teachers and coaches who had an impact on him. Mitchell grew up in a dysfunctional home, and his teachers were the most positive influences in his life. He knew he wanted to be that kind of person for other kids someday.

Mitchell has experience with all ages, having taught mostly elementary school for 40 years and then becoming a substitute after retirement. But he most enjoys working with young students and now works as the building substitute for Earl Watson Early Childhood Center in Kansas City, Kan.

Rooted in Faith

For these Christians, their faith is integral to the way they teach. Even in a public school setting where they cannot be open about their beliefs, these teachers find ways to be a light.

"I always want to impart the qualities and characteristics of Christ in the students that I teach," says Mitchell. "I always try to be a light and be an example of Christ. Everything that I do, teaching and relationships, is centered around imparting Christ and who God is to people."

He shares that he hopes to impact not just the students, but also the other adults he works with.

Owen says her faith leads to more intentionality in the way she talks to students. "The conversations are more intentional because there's a bigger purpose to them, especially when it comes to character and values and guiding kids."

Another way these teachers live out their faith is by always being willing to talk about their beliefs when the opportunity arises, while still maintaining the boundaries of school guidelines.

Sometimes, Owen says, that can be as simple as saying you went to church when a student asks about your weekend. But the conversation has to end there. Other times, if a student directly brings up Christianity, there is more room for discussion.

Teachers often deal with conflicts involving students, parents, administrators, and other teachers, and these Christians draw strength from God to handle whatever is thrown their way.

"I had a co-worker that I struggled with," Owen shares. "There were some choices she made that were not correct. And so I did a lot of prayer to help me not be frustrated, but also not to discount her as a person because of a professional conflict."

Mitchell experienced a similar situation from the outside. "A counselor at the school was in conflict with another staff member, and they confided in me to give words of advice and wisdom," he says. "I would counsel them according to the word of God. I would use principles from the word to help them deal with the conflict."

Showing Christ's Character

Perhaps the biggest way Owen's and Mitchell's faith comes through is in how they show Christ's love and live out biblical values.

Mitchell shares that he likes "Conscious Discipline," one of the models his school uses, because it is aligned with biblical love. Conscious Discipline emphasizes connecting with students and showing that you care. "They call it just your love for them, but it's really the love of God that you're expressing to them,"

Mitchell says.

With older students, Owen models Christ through her actions. "I get the opportunity to be a role model of what is correct and what is loving…in a way that's different from what a lot of kids [that are not in Christian homes] have seen."

Owen also says her biggest opportunity is being "a safe place" for students. By being someone kids are comfortable going to and talking with, the door is open for deeper, sometimes faith-based conversations. Owen shares that sometimes those conversations have happened years later, after students have already left.

"It always starts with them knowing that you're a safe place and you recognize them as a valued individual," she says.

When Convictions Are Challenged

Given the nature of public school, Christian teachers sometimes find themselves torn between their convictions and school policy. A new rule might conflict with Christian values, or a teacher might be required to teach something contrary to what the Bible teaches.

Mitchell and Owen both describe navigating this balancing act.

"As much as I possibly can, I adhere to the policy as long as it doesn't contradict my values and what the Word of God teaches," Mitchell says. "You just have to flow with it but still not be ashamed to share when the opportunity presents itself."

Owen echoes this. "I tend to be open about things I support, and then I'm much more reserved about things I do not. If someone asks me directly, I will 100% share my opinion and why, but I don't push it on other people."

When it comes to teaching something contrary to the Bible, Christian teachers can sometimes handle it by altering their focus. Owen shares about her time as a social studies teacher. She had to teach different world religions, including Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity. To address it, she focused more on the cultural impact of each religion than on details of the religious beliefs.

Other situations where Owen's values are challenged involve gender identity and pronoun issues. She says that whenever a student shared something about that, she would merely thank them for being open and refer them to a counselor. If a student wanted to go by different pronouns, Owen would try to use only their name as much as possible.

Encouragement to Others

Being a Christian teacher in a public school is not without challenges, but it also comes with unique opportunities. For anyone going into the education field or switching to a new setting, Owen and Mitchell offer some advice.

Owen encourages Christian educators to pray and stand firm in their convictions.

"Sometimes it can feel like you're kind of being torn in different directions by what's expected and what you know is right," she says. "Prayer makes a huge difference, and just staying true to your values and your actions and choices carries through, even when it feels like it's not making a difference."

Mitchell urges teachers to be a light and reflect Christ.

"Allow the Holy Spirit that resides inside of you to continue to impart Christ, not necessarily always with your words, but with your life."

–Lyra Thompson | Metro Voice

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REWARDS & RESPONSIBILITY

Dear Dave,

Our son is a freshman in high school, and he has the opportunity to take a school-sponsored, week-long trip next year with the rest of his class. The student fee is $500. Over the past couple of years, he has started making money mowing lawns and doing odd jobs around the neighborhood. We've always taught him that money comes from work, and he has always been very focused on being smart with the money he earns. Do you think we should cover the entire $500, or should he have to contribute something?

A. When it came to making these kinds of decisions at our house, my wife and I would always take a look at a few things. Is the kid behaving? Are they getting good grades? You know, just basic things that can reasonably be expected from most teenagers. Most of the time, if they were living like well-behaved, responsible young people, we'd pay for things like this as a reward.

But, there's a good argument to be made for a kid having some skin in the game at that age, too. If you and your husband can pay for it without causing yourselves any financial stress—and your son is fulfilling his responsibilities at school and at home—there's nothing wrong with you paying the fee. Then, here's an idea. If you want to make this a teachable moment, another learning experience, you could require him to work, and save up his own spending money for the trip.

I'm glad you and your husband are thinking of your teenage son as an adult in training. I know you love him, but it's also a parent's job to teach their children what they need to know for that moment when you send them off to college, trade school or even their own apartment and their first real, full-time job. Trust me, you don't have to be a finance professor to teach your child how to save money and wisely manage their finances.

I'm so impressed with the young man you're raising. To have that kind of drive and maturity at his age is a testimony to him, and to how well you and your husband have taught and guided him throughout the years. I have no doubt your son will be well-prepared to take on the world one day.

In the meantime, I hope he has lots of fun on his upcoming trip!

— Dave

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Year-End Tax Planning: Smart Moves for Pre-Retirees

By Roger Shumaker
Financial Professional at The Retirement Team

As summer draws to a close, many people are thinking about the cooler autumn days ahead, the up-coming holidays and wrapping up the year. But for pre-retirees, there is an important item that deserves attention: year-end tax planning.

The years immediately before and after retirement can be some of the most financially significant years of your life. Your income may change dramatically, you may begin drawing from retirement accounts, and decisions made today can affect your tax bill for years to come.

That is why waiting until you file your tax return may be too late.

Why Tax Planning Matters Before Retirement

While working, your income and tax situation may be relatively predictable. Retirement can change that equation. You may have income from wages, Social Security, pensions, investment accounts and retirement plans—all potentially taxed differently.

Year-end planning may provide opportunities to make strategic decisions before December 31, including reviewing retirement contributions, charitable giving, investment gains and losses, and the timing of certain income or deductions.

For some pre-retirees, it may also make sense to consider whether converting a portion of traditional retirement savings to a Roth account could fit their long-term strategy. The right answer depends on individual circumstances, current and future tax rates, income and retirement goals.

Six Year-End Planning Tips for Pre-Retirees

1. Review Your Retirement Contributions

Before the year ends, review how much you have contributed to your employer-sponsored retirement plan and whether you are taking full advantage of available contribution opportunities.

If you are age 50 or older, catch-up contribution rules may allow you to contribute additional amounts, subject to applicable limits and requirements.

Don't simply ask, "How much can I contribute?" Also ask, "How much should I contribute given my retirement timeline and tax situation?"

2. Consider Roth Conversion Opportunities

The years between leaving the workforce and beginning required distributions from retirement accounts can sometimes create a valuable tax-planning window.

A Roth conversion moves money from a traditional retirement account into a Roth account and generally creates taxable income in the year of the conversion. Depending on your circumstances, converting during a lower-income year may make sense.

However, a Roth conversion isn't automatically beneficial for everyone. It can affect your tax bracket and potentially other income-related costs. A financial planner and tax professional can help determine whether the strategy fits your overall plan.

3. Look at Your Investment Gains and Losses

Review your taxable investment accounts before year-end. If you have investments that have declined in value, tax-loss harvesting may be worth discussing. Losses may potentially be used to offset capital gains, subject to tax rules.

At the same time, don't sell an investment solely for a tax benefit without considering whether it still belongs in your long-term investment strategy.

Tax planning should support your investment plan—not replace it.

4. Think About Charitable Giving

If charitable giving is part of your financial plan, year-end is a good time to review how you are making those gifts.

For eligible taxpayers, donating appreciated securities may provide tax advantages compared with selling the investment and donating cash. Individuals who are eligible to make qualified charitable distributions from certain retirement accounts may also want to discuss that strategy with their financial and tax professionals.

The key is to plan charitable gifts intentionally rather than waiting until the last minute.

5. Estimate Next Year's Income

One of the most overlooked planning opportunities is simply looking ahead.

Will you retire next year? Start Social Security? Receive a pension? Sell a business or property? Begin taking withdrawals from retirement accounts?

A significant income change can create both challenges and opportunities. Estimating next year's income now can help you and your advisors evaluate strategies before the new tax year begins.

6. Review Beneficiaries and Your Overall Retirement Plan

Tax planning shouldn't happen in isolation.

Year-end is also an excellent time to review beneficiaries on retirement accounts and insurance policies, estate-planning documents, cash reserves and your expected sources of retirement income.

Ask yourself:

- Do I know where my retirement income will come from?
- Which accounts should I draw from first?
- How much income will I need each year?
- Have my beneficiaries changed?
- Am I prepared for unexpected expenses?
- Is my investment strategy still appropriate as retirement approaches?

These questions can be just as important as the size of your tax bill.

Don't Wait Until Tax Season

Good tax planning isn't simply about finding ways to reduce this year's taxes. It is about understanding

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Four Strategies to Make the Most of Your Charitable Giving in 2026

By Jim Hanna

Hanna

Charitable giving is a meaningful way to support the organizations and communities that reflect your values. Whether you're drawn to helping local nonprofits, funding educational initiatives, or supporting national causes, thoughtful planning can help your generosity create deeper impact while aligning with your broader financial goals. By incorporating charitable strategies into your financial plan, you can support meaningful work today, while strengthening your long-term financial outlook.

Donate appreciated assets for greater tax efficiency. If you hold stocks or other investments that have increased in value, donating them directly to a qualified charity may offer significant advantages. When you gift appreciated assets, you may be able to avoid the capital gains taxes that would apply if you sold the investment yourself. The charity benefits by receiving the full market value of the asset, and if you itemize, you may be eligible to claim a charitable deduction within IRS limits. Before taking this step, be sure your preferred organization can accept non-cash contributions. This strategy allows you to maximize the value of your gift while keeping your financial plan working efficiently.

Explore charitable trusts and donor-advised funds. For individuals looking to integrate charitable giving into more comprehensive financial or estate planning, charitable trusts can serve as valuable tools. A Charitable Lead Trust provides income to a designated charity for a defined period, after which remaining assets pass to your beneficiaries. A Charitable Remainder Trust offers the inverse structure, providing income to you or a loved one first, with the remainder going to charity. Each option may offer tax and planning advantages, but guidance from legal and tax professionals is essential to ensure the structure aligns with your goals.

If you prefer a simpler, more flexible approach, a donor-advised fund may be worth considering. This type of fund allows you to make a significant contribution upfront—potentially receiving an immediate tax deduction—while recommending grants to charities over time. It offers flexibility, administrative ease, and the ability to give thoughtfully at your own pace.

Leverage workplace giving programs. Some employers make charitable giving easier by offering payroll-deduction programs that allow you to support your favorite causes throughout the year. Many companies also offer donation-matching programs, which can increase the value of your gift at no additional cost to you. If your employer provides these benefits, review which charities qualify for matching funds. Workplace giving allows you to incorporate philanthropy into your routine and amplify the impact of your contributions.

Make Charitable IRA distributions. If you are age 70½ or older, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA may provide a tax-efficient way to meet your philanthropic goals. A QCD allows you to transfer up to $111,000 in 2026 directly to a qualified charity without treating the distribution as taxable income.1 This approach can also help you meet required minimum distributions when that time comes. If you're approaching the age for mandatory withdrawals, incorporating charitable giving into your retirement strategy may offer both planning and tax benefits. For more details about required minimum distribution rules, visit IRS.gov.

Charitable giving is most impactful when it reflects your personal values and aligns with a thoughtful financial strategy. As you consider the best ways to support the causes you care about, a financial advisor and tax professional can help identify approaches that meet both your philanthropic and financial objectives. With the right planning, your generosity can create meaningful change today while supporting your long-term financial well-being.

1 - Tax inflation adjustments and retirement limits for 2026; Ameriprise Financial. https://www.ameriprise.com/financial-goals-priorities/taxes/retirement-limits-tax-brackets#5

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How to Save a Boatload in Tax if You Work(ed) for the Federal Government or a University

By Ryan Shumaker
Smartvestor Pro

Ryan hosts a radio show Saturdays at 7:30am & Sundays at 8am on FM93.5/AM1440. Listen anytime at RetireLawrence.com/Radio

Retirees are one of the highest and most unfairly taxed groups. Every dollar that needlessly goes to taxes is one additional dollar you must make up for elsewhere, whether that be by taking on extra investment risk, spending less, or not having as much to pass on as a legacy.

One of the core things we assist clients with is tax reduction, since we feel that most people should be free to spend their hard-earned money as they see fit. If you're someone who feels they don't pay enough in taxes, I have great news! At www.treasury.gov you can anonymously donate to either help pay off the nation's $40 trillion dollar debt (which works out to $360,000 per taxpayer) or pay extra into the general revenue fund where the government decides the best use of your money. Believe it or not, every year there are people that do one or both. One individual recently gave over $1.5 million!

If you're like most of our clients and would prefer to decide where your money goes and currently or previously worked for either the federal government or one of the major universities in Kansas, there are several tax exemptions that can save you an incredible amount of money. How much money? Well, in the case of taxes paid to Kansas, the answer is **all of it!** You see, about a decade ago there was a challenge to K.S.A. 79-32,117(vii) which, in a nutshell, states if you have retirement income from the federal government (like a pension) you are exempt from having to pay state income tax on any of that money. The challenge was whether money that was in a TSP (Thrift Savings Plan, which is like the 401(k) equivalent for federal workers) falls under the same exemption. After a bill failed to pass that would have added language to clarify this, the Department of Revenue decided their interpretation moving forward would be that any money that was in, or subsequently rolled over from, a TSP plan would qualify for the state tax exemption. We've seen many cases where retired federal employees (and/or their tax preparers) are unaware of this and have needlessly paid income tax on their retirement money. Given that the highest income tax bracket in Kansas is 5.58%, this can add up quickly. If, for example, you withdrew one million dollars over time that is $55,800 in tax that could be saved!

A very similar provision also applies

■ See RYAN SHUMAKER on page 9

opinion

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The Case for Joy in Ecclesiastes

By Dr. Michael Brown

Does the Book of Ecclesiastes have a message for us today in a world that seems to have gone totally mad?

Does this ancient writing have a message for those in the midst of so much suffering and pain?

More than any other biblical book, Ecclesiastes is associated with skepticism, cynicism, and pessimism, pointing to both the frailty and futility of life. *Why are we here after all? To what purpose? And why bother trying to change things? It's just the same old cycle over and over again. And all for what?*

As expressed in the second verse of the book,

"'Meaningless! Meaningless!' says the Teacher. 'Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless.'" (Ecc 1:2, NIV).

Of course, the end of the book comes to a sober, orthodox conclusion. In short, having done it all, having had it all, the author of the book says that only one thing matters:

"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil" (Ecc 12:13-14).

As expressed by Old Testament commentator Derek Kidner, throughout Ecclesiastes,

"Path after path will be relentlessly explored to the very point at which it comes to nothing. In the end, only one way will be left."

That is certainly the central message of the book, the message you are left with when you read all twelve chapters to the end. But is there another message that emerges from the book, a sub-message to the larger conclusion?

As the author takes you on his journey through life, he does give voice to cynicism and skepticism, with comments like this:

"All things are wearisome, more than one can say. The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing." (1:8)

And this:

"with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief" (1:18).

And this:

"the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered; the days have already come when both have been forgotten. Like the fool, the wise too must die!" (2:16)

And this:

"I have seen something else under the sun: The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favor to the learned; but time and chance happen to them all" (9:11).

You can see why Ecclesiastes is a favorite book of skeptical readers of the Bible.

Yet embedded in these skeptical observations is a common refrain found several times in the book which basically says, *"Enjoying life is a gift from God!"*

This is not to be mistaken for the worldly philosophy which says, *"Eat,*

■ Continued on next page

Is There Life After Death?

CLINT DECKER
President and Evangelist with Great Awakenings, Inc.

Speaking Truth

As a little boy I stood with my parents at a graveside service when a small plastic shovel was presented to me. I was asked if I wanted to scoop some dirt and toss it on the casket. I turned my head downward, then nervously backed into my mother and declined. As a I child I did not know what to make of death. It scared me. Even though my dad was a pastor and I was in church every Sunday, it did not make sense. I feared death. One reason why is that I did not understand it. It seemed so final. One day, someone is here, then the next day we are having a funeral for them.

When I was a pastor, a man told me, "When I die, I'm just going six feet under. That's it. No more." Is that true? Is death really that final, or is there something more? Let us explore what happens at death, and ask the question, "Is there life beyond the grave?"

Upwards of 73% of adults believe in some type of afterlife, while 17% are adamant there is nothing after the grave. And when we explore different religions, they have their own ideas. So what is the answer? This is where I turn to the Creator God and His Word to ask questions, for He is the source of truth.

1. We will all face death. God says, "And just as it is appointed for man to die once…" (Hebrews 9:27) In 2025, 63 million people died worldwide, or an average of 173,000 a day.

2. Upon death our eternal soul will depart from us. The Bible shares the story of Rachel who was giving birth to a child as she was dying, "...as her soul was departing…she called his name Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried…" (Genesis 35:18-19) We are both physical and spiritual beings. At the moment of death, while our physical body remains, the spiritual part of our body (soul) departs from us into another dimension.

3. Our soul will depart into the afterlife. God explains, "…many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and

some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2) The moment a person dies, they immediately awake into the afterlife, where they are either in utter joy or horror with no chance to go back and make any changes. And no prayers on their behalf can change their fate.

4. We will all face eternal judgement. After death, everyone will eventually be summoned to stand in the great courtroom of eternity, presided over by the Supreme Judge of the Universe, Jesus the Christ. The Bible says, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)

It is certain that death will come to all. It is also certain that there is life after death, either a life of eternal torment under the judgement of God or an eternal life of beauty and majesty in the presence Jesus forever.

The Bible is very clear in how to prepare for this. One must admit their disobedience against God and turn from it at once. Then one must place their trust fully in Christ, who died and rose again for them. It is simple, but hard, and will cost you everything. But through it, you will receive the gift of forgiveness and the indwelling power of God's Spirit. And when you are transformed like this and walk faithfully with God, you will face death with confidence, certainty and with a joy of what lay beyond the grave.

A prayer for you – Lord God, I pray you will prepare people's hearts and lives to encounter death's door. May they not fear, but face the prospect of it with peace, knowing it is well with their soul. In Jesus' name. Amen.

–Clint Decker is President of Great Awakenings. Share your comment at cdecker@greatawakenings.org and follow his blog at clintdecker.blogspot.com.

"Imagine": Notes on the Democratic Socialists

By Carolyn Cogswell

"Imagine taking a day off from work in a future without capitalism."

"You have no debt. You don't need health insurance. You don't pay a mortgage or have a landlord because comfortable housing is a human right. Your retirement is publicly funded. Food, education, energy, medicine, and transportation aren't for-profit; they are common goods and utilities."

They dream of a "classless society" (to eliminate "class struggle")— a utopia where everyone will "labor for our common good."

Instead of "public shaming" by police and "moral punishment" through the use of "mass incarceration," law and order and "police immunity," they strive for "socialist discipline" and "comradely correction." Below is a quick-reference bullet list extracted directly from their program website (reference below).

• Expand the House of Representatives and Abolish the Senate

• Establish public ownership of the largest corporations

• Heavy taxes on large corporations and wealthy individuals

• Healthcare for all

• Housing for all

• Voting rights to all permanent US residents

• Abolish ICE

• Abolish national borders ("subcultural boundary maintenance")

• Statehood for DC

• Trans Rights and Bodily Autonomy ("End patriarchal restrictions on abortion")

• "Feminism for all"/ "Queer Liberation"

• Reproductive and gender affirming care

• Free Palestine

• Green New Deal/Climate Crisis

• End blockades, embargoes and sanctions

• "End the US War Machine"/No Iran War/ Stop supporting Israel

This is just a small sample of what I learned with a cursory review of this document which available for all to see at program.dsausa.org.

Below is an AI Overview of the document itself.

The Democratic Socialists of America released a national policy program titled "Workers Deserve More". The platform seeks to replace capitalism with democratic social ownership, proposing sweeping economic, social, and structural changes to the United States government.

Economy and Labor

• Public ownership of major energy, pharmaceutical, and financial industries.

• Heavy taxes on large corporations and wealthy individuals.

• A federally mandated 32-hour workweek with no loss in pay.

• Expanded legal protections and power for labor unions.

Healthcare, Education, and Housing

• Government-guaranteed, single-payer universal healthcare (Medicare for All).

• Tuition-free public child care, K-12 schooling, and higher education, alongside student debt cancellation.

• Universal social housing development and nationwide rent control.

Government and Constitutional Reform

• Abolishing the U.S. Senate and the Electoral College.

• Replacing the presidency and the Supreme Court with executive and judicial leadership chosen directly by Congress.

• Granting voting rights to all permanent U.S. residents.

Criminal Justice and Immigration

• Demilitarizing police forces with a long-term goal of abolishing traditional policing and prisons.

• Dismantling Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and ending deportations.

• Providing a broad amnesty pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants

Foreign Policy

• Reducing the federal military budget and closing international military bases.

• Ending U.S. military and financial aid to Israel.

• Lifting economic sanctions on nations like Cuba, Venezuela, and Iran

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RYAN SHUMAKER

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to any benefits eligible individual that has worked for any of the Board of Regents Universities like KU, KSU, Emporia State, Wichita State, etc. in K.S.A. 74-4923(b). These differ from federal workers in that in order to get the tax exemption, the money must come directly out of a university retirement plan, like a 403(b). For federal workers you can roll your money over and out of the TSP and to another account and still maintain the tax exemption, but that isn't the case with the university plans. Does that mean you need to always keep all of your money in one of these plans? No, because you can actually put money back into these plans right before you complete a withdrawal and still receive the tax exemption! This is something we help people with regularly, as we are one of the few advisors in the state that can open retirement accounts on this plan. We can also help a client transfer money they might have from a different 401k, IRA, or other retirement account into one of these retirement plans and get them this tax break on all of their retirement money- not just what they contributed while working! We recently did this for a client that hadn't worked for KU since the 1980's, which resulted in tens of thousands in tax savings across all of their retirement account balances.

Another place we frequently see people paying taxes on retirement money when they shouldn't is a KPERS pension buyout. KPERS pensions, much like federal pensions, are exempt from Kansas tax. If you elect to take a buyout of your KPERS pension and roll that money over to a retirement account that money still maintains that exemption. Unfortunately, many don't know that and end up unnecessarily paying state tax when they make a withdrawal. We often see situations where advisors unaware of this tax provision combine pension buyout money with other money they're managing and give incorrect tax reporting. This causes account holders to pay Kansas tax when they shouldn't. The good news is this can all be corrected by working with a team that understands the tax code.

If you currently or previously have worked for a major university in Kansas or for the federal government, or have taken a KPERS pension buyout, and want to ensure you're taking all the appropriate steps to maximum this tax break, schedule a complementary strategy session with one of our advisors at Retirement Portfolios.

Other great articles about retirement, investing, and tax reduction can be seen at RetireFromTaxes.com/Blog.

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. Investment advisory services offered through Retirement Portfolios, LLC.

Call Ryan at 785-330-9292.

Continued from previous page

drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die!" In context, *"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die"* is a godless response to a divine call to fasting and repentance (see Isa 22:12-14).

But the context of Ecclesiastes is different.

This is the author's reflection before God, not a word of rebellion against Him. It is a practical observation rather than a fleshly response.

To place these verses back to back:

"A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?" (2:24-25)

"I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God." (3:12-13)

"This is what I have observed to be good: that it is appropriate for a person to eat, to drink and to find satisfaction in their toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given them—for this is their lot." (5:18)

"So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun." (8:15)

"Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun." (9:7-9)

To be sure, this is not the ultimate conclusion of the book, as we have noted. And some scholars see these statements as concessions.

Yet the fact remains that this world is filled with pain and suffering. Every day there is a tragedy. Every moment there is agony. Every second there is injustice. It is absolutely maddening.

How can we be happy in a world with so much sorrow? How can we smile today when tomorrow might bring unspeakable heartache?

That's why so many people are depressed and why others take their lives. The pain is just too great, the hopelessness too overwhelming.

And that's why, with full acknowledgement of the suffering of the human race and the seeming meaninglessness of our lives, Ecclesiastes recognizes that to enjoy life is a gift from God. Don't take it for granted!

We can do this while still caring about the needs of others. We can still do this and weep with those who weep. We can still do this and live in the light of final judgment.

But while we're here in this world, even to enjoy life is a gift from God. Be grateful for it and give Him thanks, all while fearing Him and keeping His commandments.

It is a matter of both-and rather than either-or.

Hamilton's theology draws scrutiny in Kansas Senate race

Kansas Democratic Senate nominee Adam Hamilton is facing renewed criticism from Christians over his teachings on salvation, biblical authority and sexual ethics. The spotlight comes as Hamilton entered the race for US Sentate in Kansas and old sermons resurfacing that apparently show the Methodist pastor contradicting central tenets of the Christian faith.

While Metro Voice has reported on campaign finance issues, the latest dispute centers on a 2022 sermon in which Hamilton, senior pastor of Church of the Resurrection, said Muslims, Hindus, and others who never profess any faith in Jesus can still enter heaven.

"My hunch is there's going to be a whole lot of people you'd be surprised are going to be in Heaven because of the grace of God," Hamilton said.

He predicted people of other faiths would encounter Christ after death and say, "Ah, it was you all along that I was searching for."

Pastor Kelly Lohrke, founder of The Cure Church Network in Kansas City, Kan. was so taken aback that he published an open letter to the state's Christians. Hamilton's semi-universalism weakens the necessity of personal faith in Christ. Lohrke writes that "faith in Jesus Christ alone is necessary for salvation." Lohrke views the Hamilton controversy as a pastoral-accountability issue,. His argument is that Hamilton's position carries added weight because Hamilton leads a large Kansas church and presents himself publicly as a Christian minister.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, called the sermon "heretical" and cited John 14:6, where Jesus says no one comes to the Father except through him.

"Why do Democrats keep nominating 'preachers' who reject the central tenets of Christianity?" Cruz wrote on X. "This heretical 'sermon' directly contradicts the Bible."

Hamilton's campaign told The Christian Post that he was teaching "inclusivism, not universalism." A spokesman said Hamilton does not believe everyone will be saved or that all religions are equally true. Instead, Hamilton believes God may apply Christ's atonement to people who sincerely sought God without understanding that they needed to call upon Jesus.

Evangelical critics say that explanation does not answer the biblical objections.

The Lausanne Covenant, an influential statement of global evangelical belief, says salvation requires a personal response of "repentance and faith" in Christ. It rejects the claim that everyone will be saved or that other religions offer salvation through Christ.

Joshua Arnold, a senior writer for the Family Research Council's Washington Stand, said Hamilton did not finish Paul's message to the pagan Athenians in Acts 17. Paul acknowledged their religious searching but then declared that God commands "all people everywhere to repent" and has appointed Christ to judge the world.

Hamilton's teaching about the Bible has brought additional criticism. In another 2022 sermon, he rejected biblical inerrancy and said he could identify "hundreds" of errors in Scripture.

"In Luke's gospel, Jesus ascends to heaven from the Mount of Olives by Jerusalem," Hamilton said. "In Matthew's gospel, Jesus ascends to heaven from Galilee. They can't both be right. So one of them is wrong."

But there's a problem with Hamilton's scriptural knowledge. Matthew does not actually describe the ascension. Its final chapter records Jesus meeting his disciples on a mountain in Galilee and giving them the Great Commission. Acts says Christ appeared to his followers for 40 days before ascending near Jerusalem, allowing time for both events.

Hamilton has called Jesus "the only inerrant word of God." He says the Bible is inspired, authoritative and essential to Christian faith but also contains cultural assumptions and inconsistencies introduced by its human authors.

That view differs from the National Association of Evangelicals' statement that the Bible is "the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God." The Lausanne Covenant describes Scripture as truthful and "without error in all that it affirms."

Many Christians disagree over how inerrancy should be applied to poetry and other literary forms. Hamilton's assertion that the Bible contains hundreds of mistakes is on the extreme.

His views on the inerrancy of Scripture also shape his support for abortion, same-sex marriage and the ordination of clergy in same-sex relationships. Hamilton has written that biblical prohibitions against homosexuality reflect ancient and misguided cultural understandings.

During a 2015 panel hosted by the LGBTQ-affirming Reformation Project, Hamilton asked how much "latitude" Christians have to challenge Scripture and "where can we say, you know, here I think Paul's wrong?"

"That has implications for how I read the passages of Scripture that are often applied to same gender relationships," Hamilton said.

The National Association of Evangelicals defines marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman. The Lausanne Movement's 2024 Seoul Statement describes same-sex sexual conduct as contrary to God's design while calling churches to show compassion and provide pastoral care.

Hamilton's campaign may have opened up a can of worms as previously forgotten or buried sermons come to light. For critics, they show Hamilton has strayed from Christianity, and it could have a negative impact on some Christian voters only now learning about him through his US Senate race.

–Alan Goforth

Healthy Habits Help Families Start New School Year

After a change of pace during summer break, many families settle back into a routine when the school year starts. This makes it a good time to establish healthy habits that benefit parents as well as children.

Graham A. Colditz, Ph.D., associate director of prevention and control at Siteman Cancer Center at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and WashU Medicine in St. Louis, offers several tips that can help set up everyone for a happy and successful school year.

Get set for sleep success. Good sleep is an amazing foundation for the whole family. It helps with mood, concentration and many other aspects of health and wellness. Teens need about eight to 10 hours a night. Younger school kids need around nine to 12 hours. Get on a healthy sleep schedule by keeping to a set bedtime and wake-up time — and think about giving it a test run the days before school starts.

Celebrate snacks. Snacking often can be seen as negative. But healthy snacks actually can be super for kids — and parents. On top of vitamins, minerals and other healthy ingredients, they can provide energy for schoolwork and after-school activities and help keep kids from getting too hungry between meals. Pair foods such as whole-wheat crackers, sliced apples or mini-carrots with hummus, nuts or peanut butter. And try to really limit unhealthy snacks such as cookies, candy, chips, jerky and sugary soda.

Plan a meal together. Plan a healthy meal with your kids and cook it together. This can help kids build skills and feel ownership of healthy eating, and that can pay off into their adulthood. Cooking together also can be a relaxed opportunity for parents and kids to catch up on the day and talk about what's going on at school and with friends. Start with a single meal and then consider adding others throughout the year.

Highlight water. Beverage cases have more options than ever, but the best and healthiest choice for kids remains the simplest — water. Soda, energy drinks and fruit drinks are filled with sugar and calories, and very little that's healthy. Plain water from the tap or bottle- filling station is the easiest and healthiest way to go.

Check in on well-child appointments. A well-child visit with a pediatrician or other health-care provider is a great opportunity to check in on kids' overall growth and health, get caught up on important vaccines and discuss any questions parents may have about their kids' health.

Keep an eye on screen time. Kids need screens for school and many other activities. Too much screen time, though, can affect many different aspects of health and wellness. Try to limit unnecessary time on phones and computers, and encourage kids toward other activities, such as being with friends, taking part in after-school programs or just having some unstructured, unplugged time.

Make space for activity. It can sound like a lot, but kids should get around 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Even in the busy opening days of the school year, it's hard to overstate its benefits. What's fantastic is that most types of movement count, from dance and sports practice to bike rides and gardening, to walking to the school bus and just playing with friends at a park. It all adds up, and any amount of activity is better than none.

RETIREMENT TEAM

continued from page 7

how today's decisions may affect your financial picture in retirement.

For example, a strategy that lowers your taxable income today isn't automatically the best choice if it creates a larger tax burden later. Similarly, the timing of withdrawals, charitable gifts or investment transactions can matter when your income is changing.

This is where professional guidance can make a difference.

A financial planner can help coordinate your retirement income strategy, investments and tax considerations, while a tax professional can provide advice specific to your tax situation.

Make the Call Before the Calendar Turns

If you are within a few years of retirement, don't make year-end tax planning an afterthought. Now is the time to schedule a visit with a financial advisor and a tax advisor to discuss your own unique financial situation.

Come prepared with your latest retirement account statements, investment information, estimated income and a list of major financial changes you expect in the coming year. The goal isn't simply to pay less tax today. It's to make informed decisions that support the retirement you have spent years preparing for.

A conversation today could uncover an opportunity you didn't know existed—and help you start the new year with greater confidence in your retirement plan.

Contact our office today at 785-478-7808 to schedule a comprehensive estate and beneficiary review. Together, we'll help ensure your financial plan reflects your goals, protects the people you care about, and preserves the legacy you've worked so hard to build.

This material is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as investment, tax, or legal advice. All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal. Past performance is not indicative of future results. Individuals should consult with a qualified financial professional regarding their specific situation.

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SOCIALISM

continued from page 7

Capitalism Versus Socialism

• Capitalism is where you own things. In Socialism you won't own anything.

• Laissez-Faire Capitalism is where you get to decide what to do with your money; unlike Socialism where the government decides.

• In Capitalism, the production of goods and services is based on supply and demand. In Socialism the government will control this.

• In Socialism prices of everything will be decided by the government in what is called a "command economy."

• In Capitalism, the "means of production"—factories, tools, machines, raw materials, and so on—are organized by one or more business owners who provide employment for people. In Socialism and Feudalism, this is all run by a select few—primarily those in government positions.

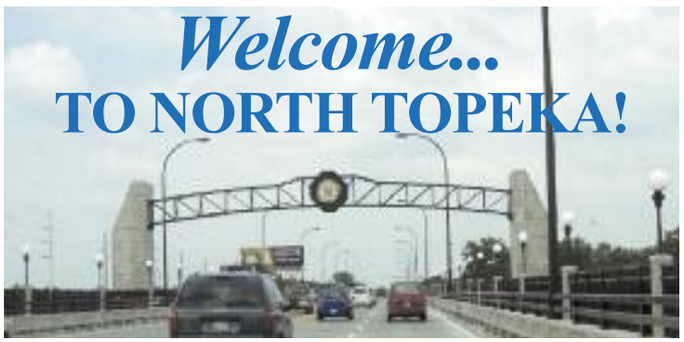
• In Capitalism we have what are known as "entrepreneurs," people who have ideas, start businesses and inspire others to do the same. In Socialism, a few, centralized individuals in government will be in control of businesses.

• Capitalism created two social classes: the capitalists (entrepreneurs, business owners) and the laboring classes. In Capitalism every person in the laboring class has the opportunity to move into a different social class by, for example, starting a business. Some people call this "The American Dream."

• Socialism wants to create a "classless society," but of course if all the "workers" have a violent revolution and destroy the Capitalist system, someone will have to be in control of the means of production and the cost and distribution of everything, and there will be no opportunity to create wealth except for the rulers (the ruling class). And so, you see, you will still have two social classes: the bosses (the government) and the workers. So, there is really no way to create a "classless society."

• Therefore, instead of what we have now which has worked well for all of our lives, the two classes created by Socialism will be the ruling class and the serfs—you and me and everyone who is not a political leader.

• Capitalism or Socialism? Do some research, educate yourself, think about it and decide. Is turning every aspect of your life over to the government so they can give away free stuff really worth losing your ability to make a living and move into a better economic status if you choose? It's a question worth asking.



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Family of God Church
1231 NW Eugene St.
Sunday 10:30am & Wed. 7:00pm
FOGchurch.com

North Topeka has new Art, Shenanigans, Holy Smokin'

First Friday Art Walk on Sep. 4 will feature the 2026 DoPiKa Project – it's all about the kids! On this First Friday, we will be celebrating this new book with refreshments and viewing of original art which will be on display! We're excited to announce a FREE CHILDREN'S BOOK GIVEAWAY happening throughout September. Every child will receive one free book—either DoPiKa: The History We Almost Forgot, or Maddie's Fashion Show (while supplies last).

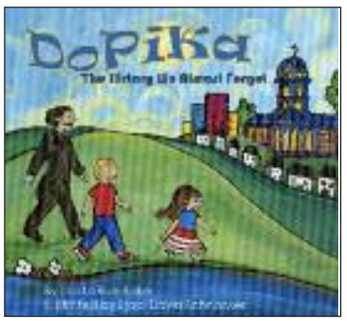
DoPiKa is a young children's book sharing the Native origins of Topeka. The book is written by Lisa Baker for the DoPiKa Project, and was illustrated by Staci Dawn Schnacker, in conjunction with a TopCity Grant, ArtsConnect, and the City of Topeka.

Maddie's **Fashion Show** is a charming paper doll book by Barbara Waterman Peters, featuring Maddie—the little Native American companion to NOTO's own character, OTTO.

First Friday Music in Redbud Park on Sep. 4 will feature Stephanie Teagarden and Tyler Swain.

The Artisan Market **Autumn Collective** event is Sep. 5, 10-3, at Rogue Events, 917 N Kansas Ave., with talented makers, artists, boutiques, bakers, and small businesses for a day filled with handcrafted goods, cozy autumn vibes, and one-of-a-kind treasures.

NOTO Summer Concert Series continues Sep. 18 with Velvet Blues Revue, a Topeka-based juke joint blues band known for delivering high-energy, crowd-engaging performances that blend blues and soul with a lively, authentic edge. A familiar presence across the local music scene, they've played at venues and events throughout the area, drawing in audiences with their dynamic stage presence and rich, roots-driven sound. Featured Youth Musician: Sophia Johnson



Here are some other North Topeka events to look forward to:

WOODSHED 1ST SATURDAYS MARKET – Sep. 5, 9-2, Woodshed Event Center parking lot. (also every Sunday) Vendor spots only $10 – just show up and pick a parking stall! Pull-through 2 spots = $20 (only $35 for Sat & Sun both). Produce, food trucks, antiques, crafts, baked goods and more!

HOLY SMOKIN JAMBOREE – Sep. 12-13, Mother Teresa Catholic Church, 2014 NW 46th St. family-friendly event with great food, drinks, bingo, cake walk, crafts, raffles, silent auction, and live music Saturday night. Car show, 5K run/walk and poker run and cornhole tourney Saturday; live auction Sunday

SPIRIT FAIR – Sep. 12-13, 10-5, Woodshed Event Center, 1901 N. Kansas Ave. Local practitioners & vendors, yoga classes, tarot readings, and more. Tickets $3. www.geminivibeskansas.com

TOPEKA FALL FEST – Oct. 10, 10-3, NOTO Arts District – Redbud Park & Veterans Park, plus Kansas Ave & Breezeway to Veterans Park. 100 vendors, food trucks, petting zoo, inflatables, kids games, face painting, live music, cake walks, fresh apple cider, pumpkin decorating. See Topeka Fall Fest on Facebook or email info@c5alive.org.

SENIORS PITCH CLUB - Every Tuesday 1 pm at Garfield Community Center. First visit free then a dollar per visit for coffee and replacement cards

Meriden Animal Hospital
Jeffrey F. Van Petten, DVM
Member - AVMA, IVAS, AVCA
Veterinary Acupuncture & Chiropractic Care
7146 K-4 Hwy, Meriden, Ks • 785-484-3358
staff@meriden-animal.com • MeridenAnimalHosp.com

TARWATER
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Hours: Mon - Fri: 8-6; Sat 8-4
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Topeka, KS 66608
OR
P.O. Box 8350
Topeka, KS 66608

Downing Septic & Grease Cleaning
785-357-0046

The Area's Most Complete Guide to the Family-Friendly Events You Want to See!

the events calendar

FREE LISTINGS! E-mail your events to: Voice@cox.net; mail to Metro Voice, P.O. 5724, Topeka, KS 66605; fax to 785-235-3340 or enter online at metrovoicenews.com
Get your event Highlighted in Blue in print, our online calendar and promoted in social media for only $29!

FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS

SATURDAY CRUISE NIGHTS – 5-9pm: 1st Sat: Spangles, 29th & Topeka Blvd (Cruise the Blvd!); 2nd Sat: Fairlawn Plaza; 3rd Sat: The Dugout, 17th & Fairlawn; 4th Sat: The Pad; 5th Sat: The Dugout.

TOPEKA FOOD TRUCK FESTIVAL – Aug. 30, 11-5, Gage Park. Games, entertainment, food trucks galore!

ING NETWORKING GROUP – Sep 2, 11:30am at IHOP North. All welcome, free to attend, order from menu

HHHS FOOD TRUCK NIGHT – Sep. 4, 4-8pm, 5720 SW 21st. Food and local bands. Bring a lawn chair.

FIRST FRIDAY MUSIC IN REDBUD PARK – Sep. 4, 5-8pm. Stephanie Teagarden: Tyler Swain.

WOODSHED 1ST SATURDAYS MARKET – Sep. 5, 9-2, Woodshed Event Center parking lot. (also every Sunday) Vendor spots only $10 – just show up and pick a parking stall! Pull-through 2 spots = $20 (only $35 for Sat & Sun both). Produce, food trucks, antiques, crafts, baked goods and more!

KANSAS CITY RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL – Sat. & Sun., Sep. 5 - Oct 18, 10am - 7pm PLUS Mondays, Sep. 7, 10am - 7pm and Oct. 12, 10am - 5pm. www.kcrenfest.com. FB @KansasCityRenFest 913-721-2110 (email voice@cox.net to see how to get free tickets from Metro Voice!)

C5Alive "POWER" LUNCHEON – Sep. 10, 11:30-1, at Celtic Fox. Featuring Chad Parks, award-winning wrestling coach for for Shawnee Heights, also involved in coaching football and FCA. Free admission. Meals available from menu if desired. Please RSVP to info@C5Alive.org so we know how many to expect. Open to the public - bring a friend!

SAVE THE DATE: C5 POWER Luncheon, Oct. 8, 11:30-1, Celtic Fox.

FRIDAY FLICKS – Sep. 11, 7pm, Evergy Plaza. "Mean Girls" is showing. Food Trucks on hand: La Creperie Co., Pineapple Dream, Taqueria Mexico Lindo. Kids activities. Movie starts at 8pm.

HUFF 'N PUFF HOT AIR BALLOON RALLY – Sep. 11-13, Huntoon & Fairlawn. Balloon launches, vendors, & more. No admission, no parking fee. Please – no drones, no pets. Weather permitting. Contact: gpbcpres@gmail.com; www.huff-n-puff.org

ICE CREAM SOCIAL – Sep. 11, 6pm at Crossroads Cowboy Church 1255 Oak St. Perry Ks. All welcome!

HOLY SMOKIN JAMBOREE – Sep. 12-13, Mother Teresa Catholic Church, 2014 NW 46th St. family-friendly event with great food, drinks, bingo, cake walk, crafts, raffles, silent auction, and live music by THE BASH Saturday night. Car show, 5K run/walk and poker run and cornhole tourney on Saturday. Outdoor Mass and live auction on Sunday. Wristbands for all-day kid games & inflatables! www.holysmokinjamboree.org

VBP VETTES 8TH ANNUAL CORVETTE SHOW – Sep. 12, 8-3, Furniture Mall of Kansas at West Ridge Mall. Entertainment, silent auction, door prizes, vendors.

SCOUTING AMERICA TROOP 7 CAR SHOW – Sep. 12, 10am-2pm, 400 SE 29th St.

CORNER MARKET – Sep. 12, 10-3, 29th & Adams, Owl's Nest parking lot. Vendors, food trucks, kids activities.

SPIRIT FAIR – Sep. 12-13, 10-5, Woodshed Event Center, 1901 N. Kansas Ave. Local practitioners & vendors, yoga classes, tarot readings, and more. Tickets $3. www.geminivibeskansas.com

TOUCH A TRUCK – Sep. 12, 9;30-1, Evergy Plaza. A hands-on showcase of massive machines, emergency vehicles, and construction equipment of all shapes and sizes. Quiet Hour 9:30-10:30am for sensitive kids

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR DR. JIM RANKIN - Sep. 13, 9am, Crossroads Cowboy Church 1255 Oak St. Perry Ks. Presentation on Frankincense King, the truth and journey on the Birth of Jesus. Dr. Rankin will keep you spellbound on his exploration in the truth and his travels. Event is free to attend.

SUMMERTIME BLUES – Sep. 16, 6-9pm, Gage Park Amphitheatre. Brody Buster, Tod's BBQ, La Creperie.

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) PROGRAM – Sep. 17, 5:30pm, Marvin Auditorium at Topeka/Shawnee Co. Library. VITA is an IRS-sponsored program provides free basic tax preparation to low- to moderate-income individuals & families.. Volunteers may participate independently or as representatives of local organizations. No tax preparation experience or accounting background required. Tax preparers, interpreters & greeters are needed. Volunteers will receive training and certification through in-person sessions in January 2027 and/or IRS online modules.. Contact Atalie Tompkins: 785-232-0062, extension 103, or atomp@ksu.edu

NOTO SUMMER CONCERT SERIES – Sep. 18, 6pm, Redbud Park. Velvet Blues Revue

GRACE POINT CHURCH 50TH ANNIVERSARY – Sep. 19-20, Saturday: Grace Point Church - 5400 SW Huntoon: 8 to noon - Open house & come-and-go birthday party, 8 to 10 am - Pancake Feed. Sunday: Sunflower Ballroom - 1717 SW Topeka Blvd: 9:30 am - Meet-and-greet. 10:30 am - Worship Service

CIDER DAYS FALL MARKET – Sep. 19-20, Exhibition Hall - Stormont Vail Events Center. Explore over 250 makers, creators, artisans and pickers.

HILLSBORO ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR – Sep. 19, 9am-4pm. Over 300 vendors from across the nation, bake sale, German food & Kaffeehaus, Midwestern Creative Art Market. Hillsboroartsandcraftsfair.org.

KANSAS BOOK FESTIVAL – Sep. 26, 9-4, Washburn University. Hear 50+ authors discuss their fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and children's books, including winners of major U.S. writing awards. Purchase a signed copy. Browse at outdoor vendor booths. Donate a used or new book to improve libraries at Kansas jails. Grab a chili dog or tropical treat from the food trucks, then sit and listen to live music. Children's storytimes and art activities. Free event. www.kansasbookfestival.com

OPEN SKIES – Sep. 26, 6-9pm, Evergy Plaza. An evening of worship, community and hope. Featuring internationally acclaimed Bethel Music with Jenn Johnson and award-winning Christian hip-hop artist KB.

GARY'S FARM FEST – Sep. 25-Oct. 31, Fri. - Sat. - Sun., 5991 17th St. Grantville.. 8 Acre Corn Maize, Pig Races, Corn Pit, Jumping Pillows, Giant Slides, Animals, more. Home Made Curly Fries, Burgers, Brats, Turkey Legs, Apple Cider Slushy. Fireworks Fridays at 9pm! garysfarmfest.com; 785-246-0800

FALL FESTIVAL AND SWAP MEET – Sep. 26-27, 7am-4pm, Meriden Antique Engine and Threshers Association, 8275 K-4 Highway. Join us as we make and sell Apple Cider, Apple Butter, and Sorghum, the old fashioned way! All exhibits will be up and running. We have modern restrooms and full service kitchen onsite. $5 per day admission.

FLINT HILLS SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL - Sep. 25-27 and Oct 2-4, St. Marys KS. A small-town, classical, outdoor theater and a village festival experience. Local volunteers transform a wooded meadow into a rustic outdoor Shakespearean amphitheater and family friendly village festival, with over fifty food, game, and artisan booths spread throughout the forest that features a full length Shakespearean show nightly: "Richard II." Gates open 5 - 11 pm, Play begins at 7:30 pm. Seating is "first come, first served". Bring your own chair or picnic blanket, or rent one at the gift shop. The entrance is located south of 28139 Mt Calvary Rd, St Marys.

LIVE MUSIC IN THE FOOD COURT – Oct. 1, 6:30-8:30. West Ridge Mall. Food and drinks available. Stranded in the City.

FIRST FRIDAY MUSIC IN REDBUD PARK – Oct. 2, 6-9pm. John Depew.

GAGE PARK FOUNDERS FEST – Oct. 2-3. Friday, free mini train rides and the Kansas Children's Discovery Center will be open for free from 9-5. Saturday, enjoy free train rides & carousel rides, rec & roll van, free zoo admission, food trucks, live music 11-3, touch a truck

HHHS FOOD TRUCK NIGHT – Oct. 2, 4-8pm, 5720 SW 21st. Food and local bands. Bring a lawn chair.

OCTOBER FEST – Oct. 3, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 3625 SW Wanamaker. Vendors with creative gifts, artisan goods, and delectable treats crafted by talented local makers! Food trucks, kids activities.

RESOURCE FAIR AND FAMILY FUN DAY – Oct. 3, 10-1:30, Woodshed Event Center, 1901 N. Kansas Ave. CDDO and Kansas DCF is hosting a variety of community organizations to share information about available programs and services, as well as giveaways, games, prizes, and food trucks. churla@sncddo.org

MAPLE HILL FALL FLING – Oct. 3, 9-2, Maple Hill Community Congregational Church, 218 Main St. Breakfast, vendors, food trucks, kids activities

WRITE ON TOPEKA AUTHOR SHOWCASE – Oct. 3, 12-3pm, Cosmos Court, 909 S. Kansas Avenue. Come meet Topeka-area authors, browse and buy signed books, and support local voices in your own backyard. Free to attend. Family friendly. Great food and drinks available on site. For info, email rcovert@stackthedeckmarketing.com

LIVE MUSIC IN THE FOOD COURT – Oct. 8, 6:30-8:30. West Ridge Mall. Food and drinks . Josh Vowell

FRIDAY FLICKS – Oct. 9, 7pm, Evergy Plaza. "Wicked-For Good ". Food Trucks on hand: R&G's Sweetery, El Zocalo. Kids activities. Movie at 8pm.

TOPEKA FALL FEST – Oct. 10, 10-3, NOTO Arts District – Redbud Park & Veterans Park, plus Kansas Ave & Breezeway to Veterans Park. 100 vendors, food trucks, petting zoo, inflatables, kids games, face painting, live music, cake walks, fresh apple cider, pumpkin decorating. See Topeka Fall Fest on Facebook or email info@c5alive.org.

LIVE MUSIC IN THE FOOD COURT – Oct. 15, 6:30-8:30. West Ridge Mall. Food & drinks.. Paradize Band

MAPLE LEAF FESTIVAL – Oct. 17-18, Baldwin City.

LIVE MUSIC IN THE FOOD COURT – Oct. 22, 6:30-8:30. West Ridge Mall. Food and drinks available. Villians Dance

TOPEKA RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL - FALL FESTIVAL – Oct. 23-25, 10-6, Woodshed Event Ctr. grounds. Step back in time with. Pirates, Vikings, mermaids, live entertainment, axe & arrow games, kids zone and much more! See Topeka Renaissance Festival facebook page for details.

TOPEKA CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL AND CHRISTKINDL MARKET – Dec. 12-13, Woodshed Event Ctr., 1901 N. Kansas Ave. 50+ vendors with unique gifts, crafts, baked goods. Kids activities, phots with Santa, food trucks and more! Info: LHartman3@outlook.com

ONGOING EVENTS

DOWNTOWN TOPEKA FARMERS MARKET - Saturday's thru Oct., 7:30am-noon, 6th & Harrison. The open-air market is full of fresh fruits and vegetables, herbs, arts & crafts, flowesr, home-baked goods,etc.

BREAD BASKET FARMERS MARKET – Every Saturday 7:30am-1pm, West Ridge Mall south parking lot

MONDAY FARMERS MARKET – Mondays 7:30-11:30am, thru Sep. 14, Topeka & Sh. Co. Library, 10th & Washburn. (closed Memorial Day & Labor Day)

FARMERS MARKET - Hoyt, Wed. 3-6

ROSSVILLE FARMERS MARKET - Thu. 4-6 at the city park by the pool

OVERBROOK FARMERS MARKET – Mon. 4-6 at the fairgrounds (until Labor Day)

LAWRENCE FARMERS MARKET – Sat. 7:30 – 11:30am, 824 New Hampshire St

PERRY LECOMPTON FARMERS MARKET – Fri. 4-6:30pm, parking lot of the former Thriftway

MOTHER TERESA'S FARMERS MARKET – Saturdays, July 1 – Sep. 9, 8:30-11:30am, 2014 NW 46th St.

SK8AWAY LEARNERS SESSIONS - Every Sat. morning 11-1, Sk8away, 815 Fairlawn Family fun environment and the best deal in town, $8 per person but an adult skates for free with paid child! sk8away.net; 785-272-0303; manager@sk8away.net

SENIORS NUTRITIONAL LUNCH – Weekdays, except holidays, at noon at Auburn Civic Center, 1020 N. Washington Street. Minimal cost per person. Reservations/cancellations required 24 hours in advance by calling Meals on Wheels of Jefferson & Shawnee Co. at 295-3980. Each meal includes 1% milk & sugar-free items for diabetics. 215- 0064.

MEDICARE MONDAYS – First Mon. ea. month, 1-3pm. Topeka/Sh. Co. Public Library, 1515 SW 10th. Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging offers Senior health insurance counseling. 580-4545 or nhonl@tscpl.org

COUNTRY AND BALLROOM DANCING - Thursdays 6-9pm. Croco Hall. Info: 379-9538, 478-4760.

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

TOPEKA ACAPELLA UNLIMITED AUDITIONS –Topeka Acappella Unlimited is looking for female singers who would like to sing four-part acappella harmonies. Topeka Acappella Unlimited is a Chapter of Sweet Adelines, International. Cindy Patton: 785-640-7403

HARVESTERS MOBILE FOOD PANTRY, 1st & 3rd Sat, 2-3pm, Shawnee Heights UMC parking lot.

FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION – 4th Tue. thru Nov., 9am, 1231 NW Eugene St. Randel Ministries, Inc., in partnership with Harvesters and Family of God Church will have its monthly food distribution. No ID or proof of income required, first come first served. Distributing fresh produce and other items to families in need. 785-234-1111. RandelMinistries.com

OPEN INDOOR COURT PICKLEBALL – Sundays at 4pm, Berryton United Methodist Church (7010 SE Berryton Rd. All ages and abilities welcome.

WOODSHED MARKET – Sun. 9-2, 1901 N. Kansas Ave.

FRIDAY NIGHT FUNNIES – Every Friday at Cosmos Court, 909 S. Kansas. Weekly comedy show is only $15, or two for $25.

CORNER MARKET – 2nd Saturdays. 29th & Adams. Vendors, food trucks, music, kids activities,

GRAND OTTAWA OPRY - 2nd & 4th Saturday, 5:30PM-pre-show, 6PM showtime, Ottawa Memorial Auditorium, 301 S Hickory, Ottawa. Tickets are $15 and only at the door. Ph. 785-241-6762, email grandoopry@gmail.com. GrandOttawaOpry.com

HARVESTER'S PROGRAM FOR SENIOR CITIZENS - every second Sat., takes place at Christian Lord Ministries, 2421 SE California. Call 266-4979.

HOPE HOUSE FREE COMMUNITY CLOTHING BANK – Wed. 6-8pm and Sat. 10am-12pm, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

HARVESTER FREE MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION - 3rd Saturday each month, 10-11am, Oakland Church of the Nazarene: 939 NE Oakland

FIRST SATURDAY BREAKFAST BUFFET – 7:30 AM - 10:00 AM, Shawnee Heights UMC, 6020 SE 44th

MEETINGS & CLASSES

***Check before going to a meeting or class to see if any details have changed. We don't always get the updated info in a timely manner.**

CHRISTIAN WRITERS GROUP OF TOPEKA -1st & third Mondays, 7pm at the Hughes Room 205 of the Topeka Library. Workshop for aspiring writers. Each participant is asked to bring five copies of a two page type written sample of a work in progress. After reading the pages aloud each participant is allowed an equal number of positive and negative comments offered in a spirit of helpfulness. If you would like to read something email Charles at jccccw@gmail.com

SENIORS PITCH CLUB - Every Tuesday 1 pm at Garfield Community Center. First visit free then a dollar per visit for coffee and replacement cards

CRAFTY, SKILLED OR CREATIVE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to develop outdoor lighted displays at Ward Meade Park events. Contact Elsie, 785-256-2920.

CONCERNED WOMEN FOR AMERICA MEETING - Join other concerned people to pray and unite in action for Shawnee Co. and our Nation. For info about monthly meetings: 702-328-7835 or ks.cwfa.org.

THE HEAT – FREE fitness classes for the community. Located at Florence Crittenton Services Center for Integrative Health, 5423 SW 7th. www.flocritkansas.org

DEAF WORSHIP SERVICE – 3rd Sun., 3pm, Faith Lutheran Church, 17th & Gage. Also, every Sun. 9:30am service is interpreted.

TAI CHI FOR HEALTH – Mon. 10-11 at Lowman United Methodist Church and Thu. 9:30-10:30 at Topeka Zoo. No training needed, just watch & follow. Contact Madon Daily at 505-424-8989 or madondailey@gmail.com. To Join from Home via Zoom, contact Madon for the Zoom link.

PICKLEBALL – Mon. & Wed, 1–3pm, First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar Ave. Park on West Side, where the gym is located. Contact Dave Mathias, davemathias@sbcglobal.net, or Betsy Thompson, betsyjthompson@gmail.com.

SHEPHERD'S CENTER BOOK CLUB - 1st & 3rd Mon. 2-4pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1275 SW Boswell Ave. Call: 785-249-3258 or email shepherdstopeka@yahoo.com for the book of study.

STRENGTH, MOBILITY, STABILITY EXERCISE GROUP (SMS) Mon. 9-9:30am, Arbor Court, 4200 SW Drury Lane. Tue. & Thu, 9-9:30am, Rosehill Place, 3600 SW Gage Blvd # 97. Tue & Thu, 10-10:45, Grace UMC, 2627 SW Western Ave. Call Anne Crawford at 785-273- 4527 or email anne.crawford@cox.net.

SENIOR FIT & FUN PROGRAM - Every Mon., Wed., and Fri at 1:30 at Pleasant Hills United Methodist Church, 4525 NW Button Rd., 785-246-1737.

TOPEKA LIONS CLUB – 1st Mondays at Noon - 1 pm at The Capper Foundation, 3500 SW 10th Ave. Park on the North side. RSVP by Fri. for lunch/pay at the meeting. Visitors welcome. TopekaLions.org/contact-us to make reservations. WE SERVE!

TOPEKA NEEDLEWORK GUILD - Every Mon. (except holidays) 9a-11a in the Menninger Room of the Topeka Public Library. Bring a project to work on as we share our needleworking skills and ideas.

TOPEKA LINCOLN CLUB – 1st Tue. of month, 7pm, Topeka Public Library. Discussing our greatest President, Abraham Lincoln, and his times. The public is welcome. For info, Kirk Nystrom 785-235-6977.

SUNRISE OPTIMIST CLUB – Every Tue., 6:30am, Sunrise Optimist Complex, 720 NW 50th St. 246-1291.

NARVRE Meeting (Nat'l Assn of Retired and Veteran Railroad Employees): 2nd Tue each month at Museum of the KS National Guard, 125 SE Airport Dr, 9:30AM.

FRATERNAL ORDER OF EAGLES Aerie 4319: 1st & 3rd Tue. 7pm; Auxiliary: 1st & 4th Tue. 6pm, 2941 SE Fremont Street. An international non-profit organization uniting fraternally in the spirit of liberty, truth, justice, and equality, to make human life more desirable by lessening its ills and promoting peace, prosperity, gladness and hope. www.foe.com 785-266-7307

DUPLICATE BRIDGE - Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:30PM at The Woman's Club of Topeka, 5221 SW West Dr. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett play duplicate bridge! It is great for your brain health. For additional information email janescola@hotmail.com.

O.W.L.S. (Older Wise Loving Saints) - meets the second Tuesday of the month. Location varies and can be found at www.faithfamilylife.com

MAP GROUP (MEMOIRS, ANCESTRY, PHOTOS) - VIA ZOOM - 4th Wed. 10-11:30am. Contact Rich McReynolds at rlm4017@gmail.com. Via Zoom link

FAMILY HISTORY WRITING GROUP - 2nd Wed. 10-11:30am, Lowman United Methodist Church, room 12. Do you have great family stories to tell and want to pass them down to the next generation but don't know where to start? shepherdstopeka@yahoo.com

S.W.A.G. (Spiritual Warriors Anointed by God) youth group - Wed at 7:00 p.m. 3710 NW Topeka Blvd.

AWANA – Every Wed., 6-8pm, First Southern Baptist Church, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 272-0443.

AWANA – Every Wed. starting Aug. 19, 6:00pm, Bethel Baptist Church, 4011 N. Kansas Ave. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. Info: 286-0467.

AWANA – Every Wed., 6:30-8pm, Auburn Christian Church. Bible based program for children & youth ages 3-HS. For info: 256-2515.

VIP LUNCHEON FOR SENIORS – Every Wed., 10:45 Bible Study and meal at Noon, Topeka Church of the Brethren, 3201 NW Rochester Rd. (1 mile north of Dillon's North). FREE lunch with Christian fellowship, devotions & entertainment provided by Topeka North Outreach. Free will donations accepted. For info: 785-224-8803 or vip@topekanorthoutreach.org.

STUDENT IMPACT – Every Wed., 6–8pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Youth games, teaching, worship, small groups. For info: 272-0443.

CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE – Every Thurs. 7–9pm, First Southern Baptist, 1912 SW Gage Blvd. Worship for

college students.

TOPEKA COSMOPOLITAN CLUB: The Club that fights Diabetes -- Meetings: first three Thursdays of every month, 12 noon, at the Topeka Country Club.

INTENTIONAL MOM - 1st & 3rd Thurs., 9-11:30am, Topeka Bible Church Auditorium, 1135 SW College. For all moms, helping to be intentional! 234-5545.

OPERATION BACKPACK – 1st Thurs., 6pm, Indian Creek Elementary School, 4303 NE Indian Creek Rd. Volunteers assemble Weekend Snack Sacks for low-income students. No assembly in August. Sponsored by Topeka North Outreach: 286-1370.

LINE DANCING - 2nd & 4th Thu. 1:30-3:30 at First Baptist Church, 3033 SW MacVicar Ave. Contact Karen Botkin at 785-945-6785 or Jim Baer at 785-256-2432 or jimbaer73@gmail.com to register.

BRIDGE GROUP - 1st & 3rd Thu. 1- 3:30pm, at Our Savior Lutheran Church, 2021 SW 29th St. To play, arrangements must be made by Mon. 5pm with Joan Arterburn at 408-5174.

TOPEKA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY – 4th Thurs., 7pm, Topeka Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th St. No program in Nov. or Dec. Promotes & stimulates the education, knowledge & interest of the membership & the public in family history, genealogical records & research. 233-5762 or tgstopeka.org.

KINGDOM ADVISORS TOPEKA AREA STUDY GROUP - 3rd Thu., 11:30am-1pm via Zoom. Christian financial professionals: financial planners, accountants, attorney's & insurance agents invited. For info: kingdomadvisors.org or Jim Hanna, james.c.hanna@ampf.com or 785.357.6278 x19.

A GOOD YARN CLUB – 2nd & 4th Sat., 9-11am, Wanamaker Rd Baptist Church, 2700 SW Wanamaker. Doing Good for Others: Knitting & Crocheting for Local Charities, free yarn, needles, hooks & patterns. All are welcome. Info: Anne, 785-272-9249 or kittens812@sbcglobal.net

TOPEKA GEM AND MINERAL SOCIETY - 4th Fridays, 7:15pm, 1st Congressional Church, 1701 SW Collins.

BIBLE QUIZZING – 1st Sat. Learn God's Word & have fun with area Christian youth age 9-19. YFC/YEA style quizzing & rules. 913-593-6427 or biblequizzer.org.

MONTHLY SCORE MEETING – 1st Sat., 8-9:30am, Washburn Tech, 5724 SW Huntoon (enter east doors facing Huntoon). No RSVP or fee is required. Small business owners are invited to a Breakfast Roundtable discussion with members of SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives). Info: 234-3049.

TOPEKA GREAT LIGHT AGLOW – For info contact Vickie Lynch at greatlighttopeka@gmail.com.

SUPPORT GROUPS

PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUP meets 1st Thursday every month at 5:30 pm, Midland Hospice House, 200 SW Frazier. Jean Barton 785-478-9045.

HOPE AND HEALING ACADEMY harnesses the power of horses to transform the human spirit. For info: 785-224-4232 or www.hopeandhealingacademy.com.

OVERCOMER'S OUTREACH ANONYMOUS RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUP – Mondays 6:30-7:30pm, at Be Filled Of South Topeka, 200 Airport Rd, Bldg. 818 Suite 1. Led by Pastor Bill Ritchey. 785-817-2802

BINDING UP THE BROKEN HEARTED – Sessions offered for women who suffer from the after-effects of abortion. All the women who lead these sessions have had an abortion and have received healing from God's Word. For info, contact local Healing Hearts representative Shelly Brush, First Southern Baptist Church at shelly.b@healinghearts.org. All communication is confidential and secure.

MIDLAND CARE GRIEF SUPPORT Groups: Building A, 200 SW Frazier Circle; Every Mon., 4-5pm: 12 Week Adult Group for Recent Loss 1st and 3rd Thu., 10:30am & 5:30pm—Ongoing Adult Group 1st and 3rd Thu., 5:30pm: Ongoing Young Adult Group (4-18 years of age) For All Groups: Call for start dates and info packet. Group and individual grief support available upon request. Info: 785-232-2044 ext.341

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS - Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging provides an opportunity for caregivers to get together and share their ideas and feelings. 2nd Monday, 3:30pm, Topeka public library, Anton Rm. 3rd Friday, 12 noon, Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, 2910 SW Topeka

ABORTION RECOVERY SUPPORT – Providing services for women & men who suffer from Post-Abortion Syndrome. Kay Lyn at KLCarlson20@cox.net.

AL-ANON is a support group for families and friends of alcoholics. For info on meetings in the Topeka area email ais-topeka@kansas-al-anon.org or 785-215-1045. All correspondence confidential

PURSUIT FOR SEXUAL PURITY – Men struggling with pornography & sexual addiction. This bible study/ accountability group uses the Pure Desire book by Ted Roberts. For info: 249-9509. All inquiries confidential.

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUPS – Monthly support group meetings for caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. All of our programs have moved from in-person to virtual.

Caregiver support group via Skype 9:30am every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info.

Caregiver Support Group via Google Hangouts, 4:30pm every other Wednesday. Email Hayley Young at hdyoung@alz.org or call 785.379.3067 for the meeting link and other info..

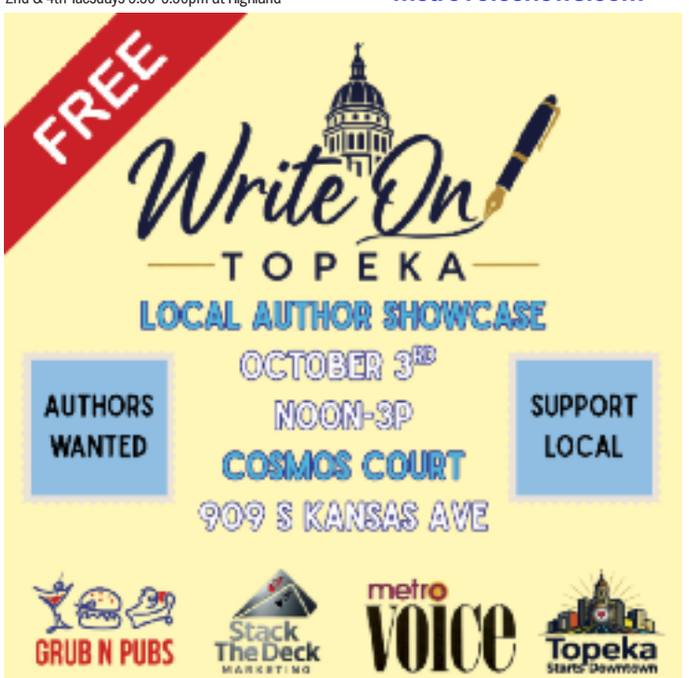
COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS/BEREAVED PARENTS GROUP – 4th Mon. in Formation classroom at Most Pure Heart of Mary, 17th & Stone. Discussion starts 7pm; fellowship & refreshments 8:30. 785-272-4895

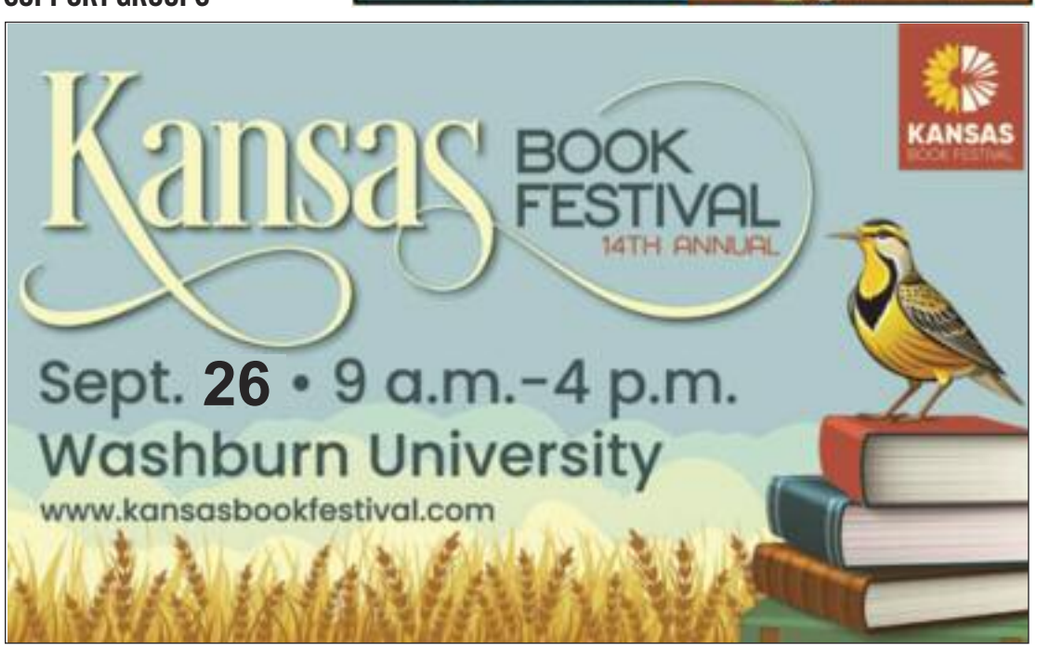
CAREGIVERS GROUP - Caring Hearts of Hope meet 2nd & 4th Tuesdays 5:30-6:30pm at Highland Heights Christian Church. Encouragement in God's word and prayer as well as conversation and sharing, open to all those who care for others with illnesses such as Alzheimers, dementia, cancer or other debilitating illnesses or injuries. For info:"Weekly Class List" at www.highlandheightscc.com or call 785-379-5642.

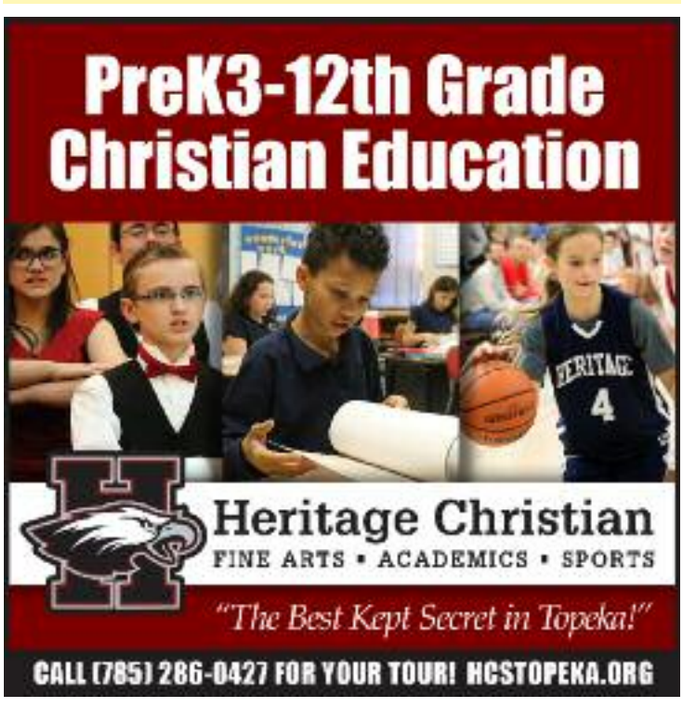
FIBROMYALGIA & CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP – 2nd Tue., 7-9pm. First Congregational Church, 17th and Collins. For info: Randy at 785-969-4038 or TopekaCFS@outlook.com.

GRANDPARENT/RELATIVE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP – 3rd Tue., 6:30-8pm, 2nd floor meeting room, St. Francis Hosp, 1700 SW 7th. For info: Sharla, 286-2329; Jennie (English/Spanish) 231-0763.

Send your calendar events to voice@cox.net
See complete calendar at metrovoicenews.com







entertainment

Echoes of Truth: How Popular Stories Reflect Timeless Christian Themes

After years of fighting against the powers of evil, a man willingly walks toward death. He is about to complete the mission he was born for: to save humanity by facing the enemy who sought to leave him powerless. The man dies, sacrificing himself to save the people he loves. But that's not the end of the story. The man comes back to life, defeating the enemy who thought he had won.

The story is familiar. It sounds a lot like the Easter story. It is also the climax of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

While I am by no means saying that the fictional protagonist is a Christ figure, I am pointing out one well-known example of a broader trend—when popular stories reflect biblical messages such as sacrifice, redemption, and good triumphing over evil.

From fantasy novels to animated movies, many themes at the heart of Christianity can be found in popular stories, whether intentionally or not. In this article, I will look at a few beloved works with core messages that ultimately point to the God of the Bible.

Harry Potter: Good Ultimately Triumphs

The Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling has many biblical parallels, like the example of sacrifice and resurrection mentioned above. But the overarching story from the first to the last book is also a familiar one: Goodness always triumphs over evil in the end.

In the books, Harry is always threatened by the story's recurring villain—Lord Voldemort. The two opposing sides represent the opposing forces of good and evil. Much like real-life spiritual warfare, Voldemort sometimes succeeds. Sometimes his power wins the moment. But in the end, he is defeated, just as Jesus defeated Satan through His death on the cross.

There are also some smaller biblical themes present in the series. Lord Voldemort is a lesson on how desiring power above all else leads to corruption and destruction. In his quest for immortality, Voldemort makes Horcruxes, tethering him to life but splitting his soul each time. Eventually, although he is "alive," he isn't really living. He remains physically alive, but Voldemort has nearly destroyed his soul in his ruthless chase of immortality.

Finally, the Bible has a lot to say about contentment and stewarding what you have—for example, with the parable of the talents. In the Harry Potter books, the Weasley family embodies these traits. While they are financially poor, they are rich in love and joy. They make the most of what they have and are happy and successful in the ways that matter.

The Avengers: Morality and Sacrifice

Captain America, Iron Man, and the rest of the Marvel heroes demonstrate many Christian principles. The first can be found in the character of Steve Rogers, a.k.a. Captain America.

One of the biggest traits Steve is known for is his morality. Even before he became a superhero and was a physically frail young man enlisting in the military, he

never compromised on doing what's right. He put the lives of others before his own, he defended those who couldn't defend themselves; he even famously hated curse words. Steve embodied Philippians 4:8, valuing what is true, pure, lovely, just, and admirable.

Tony Stark, or Iron Man, also embodies biblical traits. His character arc paints a picture of redemption through Christ. He begins the series selfish and arrogant, but when he hits rock bottom, he's forced to change his perspective and eventually his heart. Tony has been transformed so much by the climax of his story that he makes the ultimate sacrifice in the battle against Thanos. He knew that his death was the only way for the heroes to win, and he willingly gave up his life to save the rest of his team.

Beyond individual heroes, the Avengers demonstrate using your gifts for good. Whether they were born with them or acquired them through some method later in life, every Marvel character has powers, or "gifts." While the villains choose to use their powers to cause harm, the good guys use them to fight back and protect people. Similarly, God gives everyone on Earth unique talents and gifts, and we need to use them to glorify Him and serve others.

Beauty and the Beast: Looking Past Outward Appearances

Beauty and the Beast might not seem like a story with Christian messages, but there are actually many biblical themes found in the fairy tale. The biggest one comes from Belle's relationship with the Beast.

At first, Belle only sees the Beast for the monster he appears outwardly to be. But as she interacts with him, she begins to see his heart. He is more than just a beast; he is a man who wants to change. Just as Belle looks past the Beast's outward appearance, the Bible says that God looks at

the heart. It's what's on the inside that matters more than what's on the outside. At the same time, Belle does not ignore the Beast's past cruel behavior. It's only when his heart begins to change that Belles pays attention to him.

The Disney movie also shows the dangers of vanity and pride. For the Beast himself, pride is the reason he became cursed. He refused to answer the door for an old, poor woman because he thought she wasn't good enough for him, the prince. The woman—who turned out to be an enchantress in disguise—then cursed him and forced him to live as a monster until he could learn humility and love.

Gaston, the story's villain, is another picture of vanity. He is so obsessed with his own strength and appearance that he disregards the feelings of everyone around him, especially Belle's. He doesn't understand how Belle couldn't love him, and he's threatened by the Beast and wants to kill him to show off. Many times, scripture warns against thinking of oneself more than others. Gaston is an example of what can happen if that warning is not followed.

Wall-E: Stewarding God's Creation

In the Pixar classic Wall-E, the Christian themes are less obvious but still present. Wall-E is not a superhero epic full of sacrifices and saving the day. Instead, it is a simple story about a little robot who has hope and wants to restore the world. But God's teachings are present nonetheless.

The Bible often talks about stewarding creation. In Genesis, God gives Adam and Eve this command. Wall-E shows what happens if people don't take care of the world well. The movie takes place on a future version of Earth, one that has been destroyed and is uninhabitable. Humans did not steward the earth, allowing it to become the wasteland Wall-E wanders.

However, the story also shows the power of hope. While digging through trash and rubble, the little robot discovers a tiny seedling. The small sign of life amidst the destruction shows that restoration is possible. In the end, humans are able to inhabit the Earth again. Just like the little plant showed that the world could come back from ruin, Jesus redeems sinful hearts and offers salvation. There is hope, no matter how far gone one thinks they are.

Avatar: The Last Airbender: From Revenge to Redemption

Avatar: The Last Airbender is another unconventional choice. The Nickelodeon show is primarily about restoring peace to the world and fulfilling your purpose, but another major theme is redemption. This is most obvious in the character of Zuko.

Zuko starts the series with one goal: to capture the Avatar and restore his honor in the Fire Nation. This mission consumes him, and he will stop at nothing to complete it. In the first season of the show, Zuko is a harsh, hot-headed young man. As the show goes on, he grows to be a better person and eventually befriends the boy he once tried to kill, becoming a vital asset in taking down the evil Fire Lord.

Zuko's path of redemption mirrors what can happen when someone puts their faith in Jesus. No matter how many bad things a person does, there is always hope for them to turn their lives around.

The aftermath of Zuko's redemption also demonstrates another biblical principle: forgiveness. Katara, one of the main characters, at first does not accept that Zuko is on the good side. She is deeply hurt by what Zuko's people did to her people and what Zuko himself tried to do to her and her friends. She acts coldly towards him and refuses to forgive him. But eventually, Katara forgives Zuko, paralleling how Jesus forgives us and calls us to forgive others.

Why These Stories Resonate

On the surface, Christian themes appearing in secular media might not seem significant. But these examples are not accidents. While the creators might not have intended it, the biblical messages found in these stories ultimately point to the greatest Creator.

The themes I've discussed all resonate deeply with audiences. Christian or not, people understand the importance of hope, self-sacrifice, redemption, and goodness. Everyone inherently knows the difference between right and wrong. We root for the good guy to defeat the bad guy. That is because morality comes from God. Good and evil are not man-made, subjective concepts.

Even for people who do not follow Christ, God has given everyone a sense of right and wrong. Because we are created in His image, the stories we write often reflect the truth of the gospel God has placed in our hearts. Whether they realize it or not, people are drawn to themes that point to the One from whom these truths originate.

–Lyra Thompson | Metro Voice

Faith Entertainment Brings Music & Scripture to Screens and Stages

Faith entertainment offerings this month stretch from a brick-built lions' den to a survival series, two music-driven films, and a concert tour that its evangelist called a revival.

The projects differ widely but none hide their Christian purpose. Take a look at the "news brief" style short updates Metro Voice has put together this week.

Bible Lessons Click Into Place

Sean Sutton's Bible Bricks began with a problem familiar to many youth leaders: His students were more interested in building an Old Testament tabernacle than listening to him teach.

Sutton, a longtime fan of LEGO sets and video games, saw an opening.

"Jesus taught with parables and object lessons, because he knew the power of visual learning," he said.

His first Kickstarter campaign raised $245,763 from 1,699 backers, far above its $10,000 goal. The independent company's LEGO-compatible sets include the Tabernacle, Sanctuary and Messiah.

Its newest and most ambitious project, Daniel and the Lions' Den, has 1,723 pieces and a trap door that drops Daniel among the lions. The campaign had raised more than $195,000 by mid-August.

Forrest Frank Tour Ends With Gospel Response

Forrest Frank's 29-city Jesus Generation Tour drew more than 519,000 people to arenas and stadiums, according to tour producer TPR. Yet pastor Jonathan Pokluda said the response to the Gospel mattered more than the crowd count.

"I watched more than 50,000 people begin a relationship with Christ," Pokluda wrote on Instagram. "Revival isn't something I read about anymore. I saw it."

Pokluda, pastor of Harris Creek Baptist Church in Waco, Texas, preached at tour stops and said as many as 5,000 people responded on some nights. Those figures are his ministry's count and have not been independently audited. The tour concluded Aug. 1 at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas.

'The Chosen' Heads Into the Wild

Bear Grylls takes "The Chosen" actors off the set and into canyons, rivers and forests in "The Chosen in the Wild with Bear Grylls", now streaming on Prime Video.

The six episodes feature Jonathan Roumie, Elizabeth Tabish, Paras Patel, Noah James and Luke Dimyan, along with series creator Dallas Jenkins. The cast faces skydiving, rappelling and other outdoor tests while talking with Grylls about faith, fear and failure.

Grylls said those conversations come naturally outdoors.

"You go and climb a mountain with someone and watch the sunset, you probably all experience it," he told Crosswalk Headlines. "You chat about stuff, the real stuff in life."

Petra Songs Return to Theaters

The music of Christian rock pioneer Petra supplies the soundtrack for "Beyond Belief," opening nationwide Aug. 28.

Set in the 1980s, the film stars Carson Lueders as Andy, a teenage rocker grieving his father and chasing stardom. A mysterious voice telling him to "run" sends him on a journey that tests his ambition and faith.

Lueders, 25, said Petra's catalog helped him appreciate the band's influence.

"It's cool trying to bridge that gap to now show the younger generation who Petra is and what this music is," he told The Christian Post.

The film includes Lueders' new recording of Petra's "One Life" and three original songs. Petra founder Bob Hartman and singer John Schlitt have endorsed the project.

Michael W. Smith Cautions Worship Leaders

Michael W. Smith is celebrating classic praise songs while warning that worship can become too focused on the people holding the microphones.

"We have to be careful that this thing is not celebrity-driven," Smith told The Christian Post. "You watch social media, and it's just a little me-focused."

Smith and Darlene Zschech are executive producers of "House of Worship," a concert film arriving in more than 400 theaters Aug. 23. The production gathers 25 Christian artists, including CeCe Winans, Matt Redman, Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes and Israel Houghton.

The film pairs generations of performers on songs such as "Shout to the Lord," "The Heart of Worship" and "Agnus Dei." Smith said a worship leader's task is to "kind of disappear" and make room for God to meet people.

"These songs are full of hope," he said.

-Metro Voice Staff

Skillet's 'Scream' Reaches No. 1 on Christian Rock Chart

Band comes to Kansas City in October

Christian rock band Skillet's new single, "Scream," reached No. 1 on ChristianRock.Net and drew more than 1.3 million views on YouTube during its first month of release.

The song stood at No. 12 on ChristianRock.Net's Top 30 dated Aug. 9, down from eighth a week earlier. It also reached No. 14 on Billboard's Digital Song Sales chart.

Released July 10, "Scream" is the first song from a six-track project expected during the band's fall tour, RadioU reported. Additional music is planned for later this year.

Frontman John Cooper said the song grew out of a difficult period marked by betrayal, depression and what he described as a "dark night of the soul."

Cooper told ChurchLeaders in July that suffering can leave people feeling trapped amid so much noise that their cries remain internal. Christians who experience depression sometimes question whether it reflects a lack of faith, he said.

There's nothing shameful about suffering

"There's nothing shameful about suffering," Cooper told the outlet.

Although the song carries an angry sound, Cooper said its central message is not anger or surrender. He called the scream "a sign of resistance," representing the decision to trust God and continue fighting through pain.

Cooper has also tied the song to the effects of hostile online exchanges. In a separate interview with Crosswalk Headlines, he urged Christians to limit their time on social media and respond graciously to people with whom they disagree.

"Before you start judging someone else, judge yourself," Cooper said.

Skillet will begin its 24-city "Comatose: 20 Years, Still Screaming Tour" on Sept. 30. The tour commemorates the 20th anniversary of "Comatose," the 2006 album that helped broaden the band's audience.

The tour stops at the Midland Theatre in Kansas City at 7 p.m. Oct. 20.

Skillet also recently marked another commercial milestone. Its 2009 recording "Monster" has joined Spotify's Billions Club after surpassing 1 billion plays. The band says it is the only song by a Christian artist to reach that threshold.

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Fall Tree Planting: Expert Guidance for Optimal Growth

Fall is the perfect season to celebrate trees as they transform the world into vibrant shades of red, orange, green and gold. You can do more than just admire existing trees – because in many areas, fall is also an ideal time to plant new ones.

While spring is often seen as peak planting season, experts say cooler weather and autumn rains provide ideal conditions for seedlings to retain moisture and establish their root systems gradually before winter dormancy, improving their future ability to adjust to summer heat and drier conditions.

According to the Arbor Day Foundation, planting trees offers many benefits for the planet, wildlife and humans alike. From an environmental perspective, they help filter air and water, remove pollutants from the soil, slow storm surge and nurture biodiversity. Plus, access to nature can reduce stress and increase opportunities for outdoor recreation, improving overall health and well-being in your community.

This autumn, use these expert tips from Eric North, program manager of urban forestry and ISA-certified arborist at the Arbor Day Foundation, to plan your fall tree planting and add a few new hues to your local landscapes.

Choose the Right Tree

Setting your trees up for success starts with choosing the right species. Before ordering seedlings, take time to identify species that are well-suited to your local climate, soil conditions and planting site. Also consider the tree's mature height and how far the canopy will spread – it won't stay small forever, so make sure you can give it space to grow.

Think About Timing

Although you can technically plant trees until the soil is too frozen to dig a hole, it's best to schedule your fall tree planting at least six weeks before the ground freezes so the seedlings have time to adapt before winter. If you're unable to plant your trees immediately after getting them, you can store them in a cool, dry place, making sure the roots stay damp, for up to five days before putting them in the ground.

Don't Dig Too Deep

A tree planted too deep may develop root and trunk problems that can affect its long-term health. Instead of digging deep, go wide to encourage roots to spread outward. Dig a hole roughly 3-4 times wider than the root system but no deeper than the root itself. When you put the tree in the hole, the root flare (where the trunk meets the roots) should sit level with the soil or slightly above it.

Mulch with Care

Adding 2-3 inches of mulch in a layer around the base of the tree can help insulate the soil and roots, retain moisture and suppress weeds. However, be careful to keep the mulch a few inches away from the trunk itself so you don't create a "mulch volcano" that traps moisture against the bark.

Water Frequently

Cozy autumn rainstorms might share some of the workload here, but when the forecast looks clear, it's up to you to water your newly planted seedlings. Keeping the soil consistently moist allows a young tree's roots to stay hydrated and continue growing. Precise care instructions will depend on the type of tree and your location but expect to thoroughly water your trees about once a week until the ground freezes.

Protect Against Wildlife

Small trees are vulnerable to damage from local wildlife like deer and rabbits, who may chew on bark or snap fragile branches. Installing a protective fence or breathable tree guard can help safeguard trees until they're older and more capable of withstanding scavenging from hungry critters.

Join the Cause with Trees

Research from the Arbor Day Foundation's Canopy Report shows most Americans want to live in neighborhoods with more trees, but only a minority report having planted a tree in the past year. However, if you're feeling inspired to plant trees in your yard this fall, the organization is ready to help.

New members who join during the nonprofit organization's fall membership drive will receive 10 free trees suitable for their region, along with clear instructions on how to plant and care for them. Whether you're a first-time planter or a seasoned friend of the forest, you'll receive ongoing support to ensure success in your efforts to grow a greener world.

"People understand how important trees are for their communities, their health and the environment," said Dan Lambe, chief executive of the Arbor Day Foundation. "Many just need a simple way to get started. Our fall membership drive puts trees directly into people's hands and gives them the confidence to plant trees successfully."

The foundation has engaged tree planters in more than 90% of all American neighborhoods, thanks in large part to the organization's membership drives each planting season. This fall, more than 2 million new trees are expected to be distributed.

To sign up and choose your 10 free trees, visit Arborday.org/GetTrees, where you can also find additional advice on tree planting, care and more.

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sports

Drew Brees enshrined into Pro Football Hall of Fame, recalls 'when Christ came into my heart'

A weekend celebrating football and the greats who've played it was capped by the enshrinement ceremony into the Pro Football Hall of Fame for five more legends of the game in Canton, Ohio, the birthplace of today's NFL.

The 2026 class included wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald, kicker Adam Vinatieri, linebacker Luke Kuechly and running back Roger Craig. Perhaps the headliner of the class, however, was quarterback Drew Brees.

Amid a chorus of "Who Dat" chants from the many New Orleans Saints' faithful in attendance, Brees delivered the final speech of the celebratory afternoon. And in the middle of his gracious yet inspiring speech, Brees made time to point to Jesus, as he so often did during his incredible 20-year career.

"One of the most life-changing events occurred my junior year of high school (in Austin, Texas) after suffering a major knee injury, which put my athletic career in jeopardy. My identity was challenged," he said. "Up until that point, sports had defined me, and I wasn't sure who I was without it.

"Sitting in church, on my 17th birthday, Christ came into my heart and changed me forever."

"I felt protected, connected and directed towards the path that God had for me," he continued. "He would equip me for the journey, which led me to places I never could have expected."

Brees also thanked those who mentored him toward greater spiritual maturity, and he later mentioned how much he benefited from the Bible studies he participated in with his Saints teammates.

One of the most poignant moments of Brees' speech was when he discussed his arrival in New Orleans.

"Sometimes, it takes losing what can be replaced to truly appreciate the things that can't," he said, alluding the devastation New Orleans experienced after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. "New Orleans, you accepted me. You embraced me. You believed in me. But more importantly, you entrusted me with the soul of the city.

"And I would've died to protect that calling."

Orioles' Jackson Holliday navigates MLB highs & lows knowing 'my faith is way more important'

Some baseball writers predicted Jackson Holliday would have a breakout season in 2026. After making his debut as a 20-year-old in 2024, the former No. 1 overall pick was poised to take the next step in what was supposed to be his second full season with the Baltimore Orioles.

But baseball can be a fickle and, at times, unforgiving game. Before spring training could even formally get underway, Holliday suffered a broken hamate bone in his right hand during a live batting practice on Feb. 6. He had surgery the following week, which delayed his start to the season until May 19.

As is often the case with such injuries, his bat speed took a while to catch up when he did return to the field. He went 4-for-19 over his first eight games, but managed to finish May with a .242 average, two home runs, six RBIs and three stolen bases.

The struggles persisted into June. Though his powers numbers in terms of home runs (3) and RBIs (8) were up, he struck out 23 times and hit just .179. Some writers posed the question about whether Holliday would be better served by a demotion to Triple-A while he regained his timing and confidence.

He responded with July numbers that were some of the best in his career. He hit .368 with 21 hits and cut his strikeout total to 11.

"Feeling good, feeling confident," Holliday told reporters July 29 after a series win over the Detroit Tigers in which he went 8-for-11 (.727) with one double, three RBIs and three runs scored. "Feeling like I'm in a good spot to fire at pretty much any point, which is always a good sign for me."

His young career has sort of been marked by two steps forward, one step backwards. And this season has been no different. August has looked more like June so far, with Holliday 11-for-60 (.183) at the plate with one home run, five RBIs, just five walks and 17 strikeouts.

But there's still more than a month left in the season, and the Orioles (61-65) are in the mix for playoff spot as they enter Wednesday just one game out of the final wild-card spot. Holliday's hot July is a big reason for that, as the Orioles went 15-8 in July. Holliday finding his groove again could be pivotal for Baltimore securing their first playoff berth since 2024.

Jackson's mother, Leslee, has said she believes more lessons are caught than taught. If that's true, there aren't too many players who had the exposure to highs and lows of an MLB career quite like Jackson did growing up. His father is Matt Holliday, who played in the big leagues for 15 years and made seven All-Star teams. Jackson was often in and around the clubhouse, even as a young kid, and learned plenty of lessons from his dad along the way.

One of those was to keep everything in perspective, especially when you have a strong foundation of faith in Jesus.

"I think growing up in baseball is very helpful," he said in a recent interview with reporter Abby Jones. "My faith is way more important as far as keeping me grounded and understanding that it's just a game that I'm lucky enough to play. And that's very helpful having more of a Heavenly perspective in this game. That makes (dealing with) failure that much easier, I guess. This game is primarily failure, and learning how to deal with that is very important."

50+ Lifestyles

A Guide to Enjoying Life in the Best Years

9 Steps for a Lifetime of Heart-Healthy Eating

More than half of adults and about 60% of children in the United States have unhealthy diets, which can contribute to higher rates of health factors such as high blood pressure and obesity, and lead directly to poor health outcomes including death from chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease.

These findings come from the American Heart Association, a global force changing the future of health for all, which published its "2026 Dietary Guidance to Improve Cardiovascular Health" in its peer-reviewed, flagship journal "Circulation" recommending Americans follow a lifelong healthy eating pattern that may reduce cardiovascular disease risk and improve quality of life based on the latest in evidence-based science.

The statement outlines nine key features of a heart-healthy dietary pattern:

1. Adjust energy intake and expenditure to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight: Try to balance how much you eat with how active you are to reach and maintain a healthy body weight.

2. Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits: Include different colors, textures and types of produce. Remember, even canned and frozen can be nutritious and affordable.

3. Choose foods made mostly with whole grains: Foods such as whole-wheat bread, brown rice and oatmeal are typically better choices than refined grains including white bread or rice.

4. Choose healthy sources of protein: Shift from meat to plant-based sources such as legumes, including beans, peas and lentils, along with nuts and seeds; regularly consume fish and seafood; select low-fat or fat-free dairy products; and, if red meat is desired, choose lean cuts, avoid processed forms and limit portion size.

5. Choose sources of unsaturated fats: Replace saturated fats with healthy unsaturated fats, including those from nuts, seeds, avocados and nontropical plant oils.

6. Choose minimally processed foods: Go with foods close to their natural state, with minimal added commercial ingredients, rather than those that are highly processed with additives.

7. Minimize intake of added sugars: Limit the sugar-sweetened beverages you drink and the foods with added sugar you eat.

8. Choose foods low in sodium and prepare foods with minimal or no salt: Be aware of hidden sources of sodium in prepared and packaged foods, and season food with healthier options such as herbs, spices or lemon instead of salt.

9. If alcohol is not consumed, do not start; if alcohol is consumed, limit intake: Alcohol can increase your risk for high blood pressure and other health conditions, so if you don't drink, don't start.

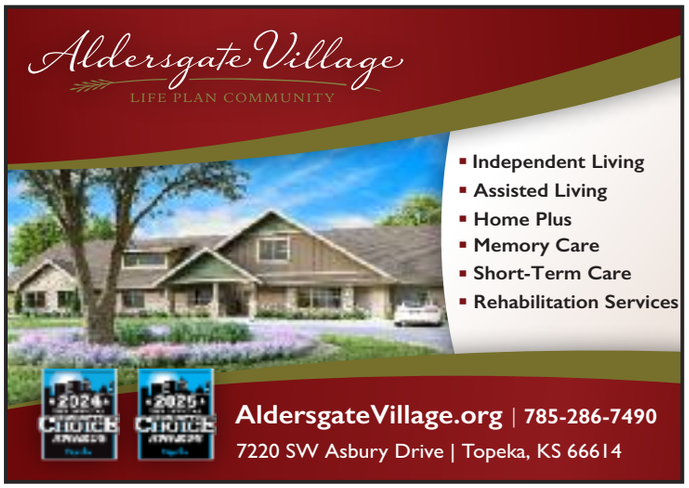
"For healthy eating to be more attainable and sustainable, we recommend people focus on their overall eating pattern rather than specific nutrients or foods," said Alice H. Lichtenstein, D.Sc., FAHA, volunteer chair of the scientific statement writing committee and senior scientist and leader of the Diet and Chronic Disease Prevention Directive at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University. "Every time you choose to make a swap for a healthier alternative, you're making a step toward a healthier life."

While the updated guidance is specifically designed to improve cardiovascular health, it's generally consistent with dietary recommendations for other conditions like Type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, some cancers and brain health as well due to shared risk factors, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, high blood sugar, excess weight and reduced kidney function.

"A healthy dietary pattern can support lifelong health and well-being beyond cardiovascular health," Lichtenstein said.

To learn more about eating for heart and brain health, visit heart.org/healthydiet and talk to your health care provider about what will work best for you.

– Feature Impact



Tips to Lower Your Blood Pressure As You Age

As you age, there's a pretty good chance you'll eventually develop high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. In fact, according to one study, about 60% of people get hypertension by the time they reach age 60.

Fortunately, high blood pressure is highly treatable and manageable through a combination of lifestyle changes and, when necessary, medication. Unfortunately, it often appears without symptoms, putting people at risk of stroke, heart failure, kidney disease, and death, without them even knowing it.

"High blood pressure is sometimes called the silent killer," said Dr. Jennifer Ziemianin, chief medical officer for HealthSpring. "But we're not going to be quiet about it. We want older adults to know about the risks and take action to manage hypertension."

The first step is to get your blood pressure checked. The American Heart Association recommends adults get their blood pressure checked at least once a year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, high blood pressure is an upper reading of 130 or above or a lower reading of 80 or above.

If your blood pressure is high, you should check it regularly using an automatic, upper arm cuff-style monitor. These monitors are widely available, affordable and easy to use. You can ask your doctor for tips if needed.

Although hypertension generally can't be cured, it can be effectively managed through a variety of measures, Ziemianin said, including the following:

Exercise. Moderate activity, such as brisk walking or swimming, can lower high blood pressure. Always talk with your doctor before starting an exercise plan. If you belong to a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan, you may have access to a fitness program at no extra cost to you.

Eat a heart-healthy diet. Having a higher body mass index is a risk factor for hypertension. That's why it's important to eat a balanced diet, including vegetables, fruits, grains, protein, dairy and oils.

Cut down on salt. As you get older, the body becomes more sensitive to salt. Too much salt can increase your blood pressure. Limit the amount of salt in your diet by choosing low-sodium seasonings when preparing meals.

Drink less alcohol. Even moderate alcohol use can increase your blood pressure. The American Health Associations recommends no more than two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

Quit smoking or don't start. Smoking increases your risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and other health problems. It's never too late to quit. If you have a Medicare plan, you have access to counseling services to help you quit. Additionally, a Medicare Part D plan may cover medications to help you stop smoking.

Manage stress. Stress can increase your blood pressure. Medicare and MA plans cover counseling services, including telehealth in some cases, to help you cope with stress.

Talk to your doctor about medication. There are several medications available to help lower your blood pressure. You may need to try several types or combinations before you find a plan that works for you. Once you find the right plan, always take your medication as prescribed. If cost is an issue, an MA plan with drug coverage, or a standalone drug plan, helps pay for most blood pressure medications.

For more information about Medicare and MA benefits that can help you lower your blood pressure, visit https://www.healthspring.com.

"Lowering blood pressure, even a small amount, can make a big difference," Ziemianin said. "That's why it's so critical for you to identify high blood pressure early and then work very closely with your primary care physician to develop a plan for managing your hypertension so you can live a longer, healthier life."

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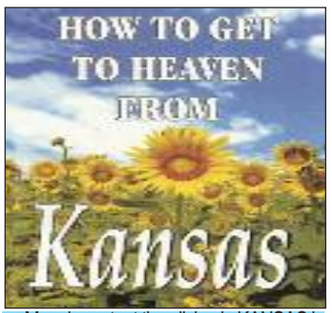

More important than living in KANSAS is where you will live forever. Just as you would look at a map of KANSAS to find your way, so you must look at the Bible to find your way to heaven. The Bible says, "Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:14). Jesus said, "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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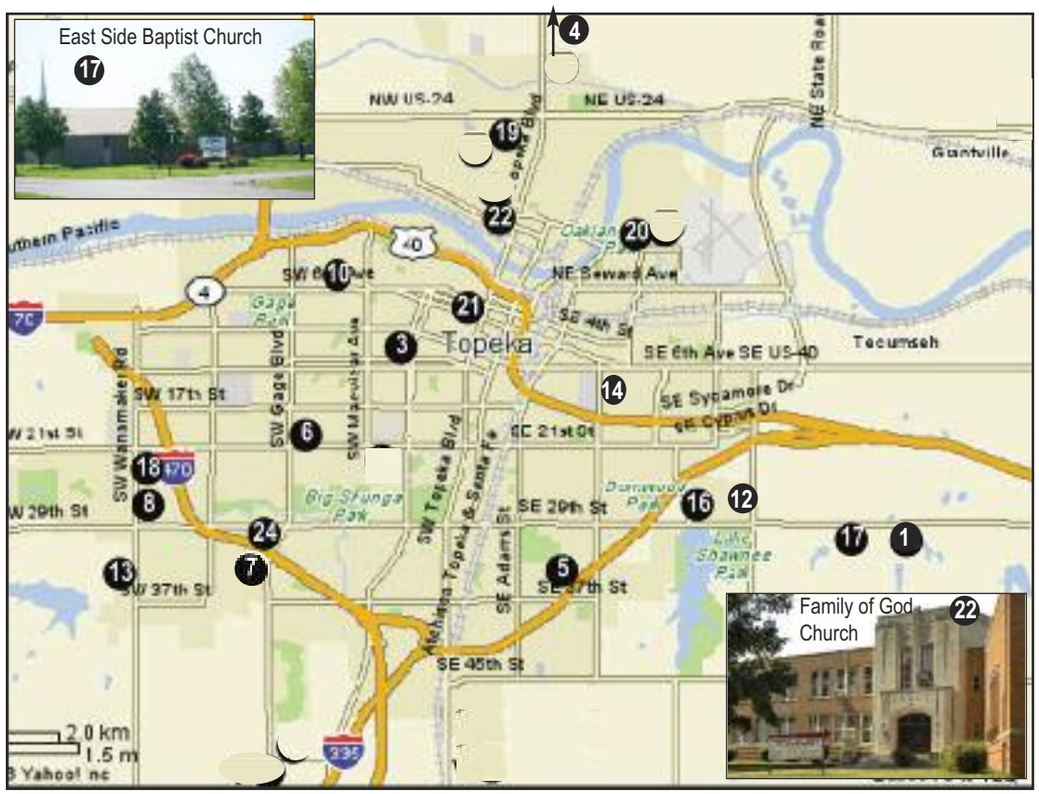

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