

CIU

TODAY

SPRING 2025



The Inauguration of Dr. William H. Jones

CIU'S EIGHTH PRESIDENT

CIU **TODAY**

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On the cover:

The Inauguration of Dr. Bill Jones



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Get on Board the Locomotive of CIU's Mission and Motto

Perhaps many of you are like me. Pictures often help me to understand concepts and plans. That's why I like using the locomotive illustration as a way to focus and to keep CIU "on the right track," as we enter our second century of ministry. In the previous edition of CIU Today, I first showed you the locomotive and the seven non-negotiables. Consider the locomotive.

As you may know, the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks run along the Broad River at the back of the CIU campus. Next time the Norfolk Southern passes through your town, or when you are waiting in your car at a railroad crossing, take a close look at the side of the locomotive. There you'll see the familiar Norfolk Southern logo with the letters NS and the outline of a horse soaring forward.

If CIU were a train, our locomotive would have our motto emblazoned across the locomotive: "To Know Him and to Make Him Known." But also moving down the tracks are the engineers in the locomotive, the CIU faculty and staff, each understanding the "mission" of the trip: "To educate students from a biblical worldview to impact the nations with the message of Christ."

The mission is simply an elaboration of our motto. Without our mission and motto, when the train reaches the switching yard, we could end up on the wrong track. We could get derailed and off-mission.

Almost every one of our faculty and staff, as well as many students, memorize our mission statement, some intentionally, others unintentionally. The latter learn it from hearing it recited in almost every meeting we have. (Just count the number of times you read it in this issue.)

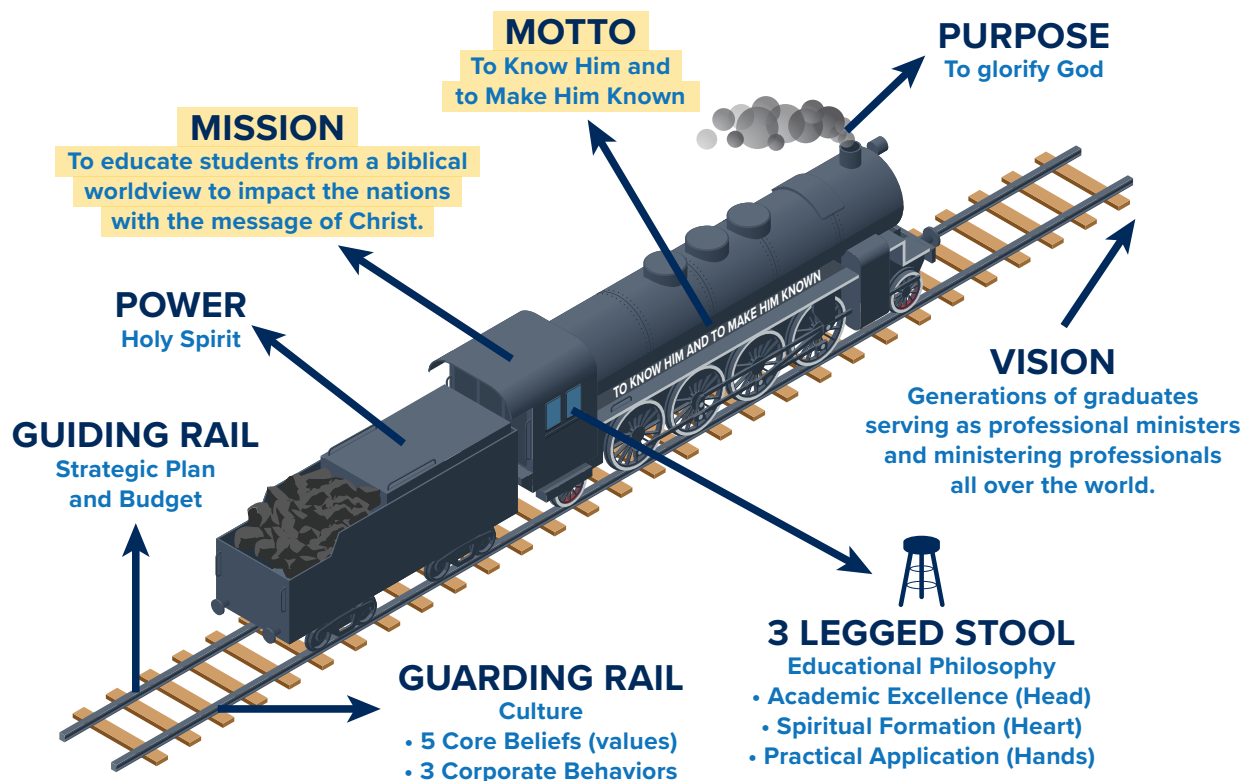
Thank you for riding on this train with us. We are grateful for our family of alumni and friends. You are living out our mission as you bring Christ to the nations wherever the Lord has led you.

In the next edition of CIU Today, we will highlight another of the seven non-negotiables from the train illustration.

For His glory,



Bill Jones
President





Nursing Students Excel

100% Pass Rate on NCLEX!

The Columbia International University nursing program is celebrating a big success. The first cohort of prelicensure Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) students had a 100% pass rate on the NCLEX-RN, the national licensing exam.

NCLEX-RN stands for the National Council Licensure Exam-Registered Nurse which the students must pass to become a licensed registered nurse. The test validates competence to provide safe, effective care.

Dean of the School of Nursing, Angela Conder, calls the students' success "amazing" because nursing schools are critiqued by their first-time pass rate.

"Achieving a 100% first time pass rate reflects the hard work and dedication of our faculty, staff, and, most importantly, our students," Conder said. "This accomplishment not only highlights the quality of education provided at CIU, but also showcases how our program integrates rigorous education and training with teaching from a biblical perspective. The result is exceedingly competent ministering professionals who are serving as the hands and feet of Christ."

Meanwhile, the students from that first cohort are all employed as nurses in the Columbia area. Conder says that is good news for the Midlands of South Carolina "because so many students go to other states and areas to work," at a time of a nationwide nursing shortage. ■

CIU Soars

The 2025 U.S. News & World Report Rankings

Columbia International University ranks high in four categories in the 2025 Best Colleges rankings released by U.S. News & World Report.

CIU is now #2 in Regional Universities (South) in Social Mobility, up three positions from the 2024 rankings. The Social Mobility ranking is important for students who are economically disadvantaged and less likely to finish college. The survey indicates CIU is among the best in making sure these students succeed.

CIU is also ranked a Best Value for Regional Universities (South) at #16. This calculation considers a school's academic quality and the net cost of attendance for a student who received the average level of need-based financial aid. The higher the quality of the program and the lower the cost, the better the deal.

Veterans will also find CIU a great choice. CIU is ranked #12 as a Best College for Veterans among Regional Universities (South).

Overall, CIU leaped into the #29 position among Regional Universities (South) up from #45 in the 2024 rankings. ■

HISTORIC SPRING ENROLLMENT

At CIU's first Chapel of the spring semester, President Dr. Bill Jones announced that the spring 2025 enrollment was the largest spring semester enrollment in CIU history! There are 2,854 CIU undergraduate and graduate students studying on campus and/or online. ■



CIU Students “Weather” Hurricane Helene

WITH VOLUNTEERISM, HELP FROM CARING FACULTY/STAFF

Hurricane Helene paid a visit to CIU. By 7 a.m. on Friday morning September 27, wind gusts in Columbia began howling at 70 miles per hour. That’s just below the official status of “hurricane force” winds. As trees fell on power lines, portions of greater Columbia were suddenly without electricity. That included CIU.

The CIU administration had already made the decision the day before to close the school after a Tropical Storm Warning was issued for all of South Carolina. Between that time, and the time the power returned the following Tuesday, much kindness overcame the challenging inconvenience of living without electricity.

Of course, without electricity, hot meals and hot showers are hard to come by. And then there is the issue of the laundry that piles up. But a request went out to faculty and staff who were fortunate to have electricity, to open their homes to students — and over 40 responded giving an opportunity for students to refresh themselves.



Staff members attended to the special needs of those who live in Pine View Apartments on campus. No refrigeration can mean spoiled food. So, the big grills behind the Pine View Community Center became the place to gather for hot dogs and hamburgers, bringing the apartment residents closer together for stress relief and fellowship.

By Saturday, power was restored to the Jones Center, home of the Cook School of Business. That’s the building nearest CIU’s entrance. It became a magnet for students who needed to charge their mobile devices. Brandon Lee, a senior, was among them.

“Everybody was camped out at the business building trying to get wi-fi, trying to do homework,” Lee said. “It was packed.”

Lee was also a part of a group of students who looked beyond campus and reached out to others in need. Students organized clean-up crews to help residents in the nearby Denny Terrace neighborhood where tree limbs and other debris littered the ground. He noted the reaction of one resident.

“She really appreciated it,” Lee said. “She invited us to stick around afterward and got us some snacks and drinks. She was really thankful. She was very sweet.”

Classes resumed by Thursday October 3. The format of the regularly scheduled Chapel was changed to focus on prayer for students and their families who live in the regions that experienced the most severe damage from the storm. Interspersed between worship music, was prayer for rescue teams in the mountains of North Carolina, sister colleges damaged from mudslides, and power company employees trying to restore electricity across the Southeast. The last to pray was College of Arts & Sciences Dean, Dr. David Dewitt:

“Lord we put our hope and our trust in many things like our electricity, our air conditioner, our refrigerator, our phones, our internet. But Lord when these things are stripped away, we see that it is only You that we can rely on and trust.” ■



CIU Security Officer Xavier Holmes ▲

Officer Honored

The Security staff was recognized at chapel for their work during the five-day electricity outage caused by Helene. To his surprise, Security Officer Xavier Holmes was given special recognition for his efforts in preventing what could have been a catastrophic fire in the Student Center. He was honored with a plaque that reads:

“In Recognition of the brave, valiant and heroic actions of CIU Security Officer

Xavier Holmes

Who prevented potentially catastrophic fire damage to the university on July 29, 2024”

Holmes was on duty that Sunday when he was notified of a fire in the Student Center’s campus store. Arriving on the scene, Holmes found the store quickly filling with smoke.

Holmes grabbed the nearest fire extinguishers and entered the store multiple times until the flames were extinguished and the fire department arrived, explaining that he held his breath during each entry.

Was he scared in those moments?

“I had too much adrenaline to be scared — it was more so my duty,” Holmes said. “I just felt like it was God’s providential hand. I believe in that. Whatever I was walking into, God had already known what it was going to be. That was my confidence.” ■

CIU Alumnus Dr. Tom Mullikin is the New Director of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR)

Mullikin earned a Ph.D. in Organizational Leadership from CIU in 2021.

SCDNR is responsible for protecting and managing the state's natural and cultural resources. With over 1,100 employees working across all 46 South Carolina counties, their mission is to serve as the principal advocate for and steward of South Carolina's natural resources.

In a statement, South Carolina Governor McMaster called Mullikin "a strong and exceptional leader."

"His expertise in environmental law and policy, combined with his proven leadership as chairman of the S.C. Floodwater Commission, makes him uniquely qualified for this role," McMaster said. "I look forward to working with Mr. Mullikin as we continue our efforts to protect and preserve our natural resources."

At a CIU World Christian Week Prayer Day last October, Mullikin told the student body, "It's crystal clear; the Lord made the Earth. Then He told us to work and keep the land."

Mullikin is in his second year of a Bible study with CIU President Dr. Bill Jones. ■



▲ Tom Mullikin speaks in chapel (Photo courtesy of W. Thomas Smith)



▲ Dr. Jeong-Ho Kim with students Caydon Thompson (right) and Austin Hilley

Biomedical Sciences

NIH-FUNDED RESEARCH AT CIU ON DIABETES AND CANCER

Columbia International University's new Biomedical Sciences program is the recipient of an important research grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Over the next three years, CIU Biomedical Sciences Professor Dr. Jeong-Ho Kim, who was awarded the grant, and his students will be researching ways to help doctors treat patients with metabolic disorders such as diabetes, obesity and cancer.

The \$328,000 grant will fund research that promises to provide significant insights into the understanding of cellular biological processes and lays the foundation for advances in disease diagnosis, treatment and prevention.

"The results will provide significant insights into the processes involved in the maintenance of glucose homeostasis in humans, especially under pathological conditions, such as hyperglycemia in diabetics and the elevated rate of glycolysis observed in many solid tumors," Kim said.

NIH grant applications undergo rigorous peer review and evaluation by scientific experts, ensuring that only the most innovative research projects receive funding.

CIU is the only private, Christian university in the Southeast to receive an NIH AREA grant in 2024. AREA (Academic Research Enhancement Award) grants are awarded to enhance the biomedical research environment of schools by providing equipment and outstanding research opportunities for undergraduate students. Kim's research has been supported by the NIH for many years.

Kim also oversees a summer research program for undergraduate students in Biomedical Sciences, which provides intensive research training in Cell and Molecular Biology. Participants will have opportunities to attend national and international conferences, where they not only present their results but also have an opportunity to network and meet potential future mentors. All participants are supported by the NIH grant. ■

To Blurry-Eyed Seminary Students:

“I get it.”

My office is on the second floor of the Schuster Building where I notice a lot of blurry eyes. That's because most of the students who pass by are seminary students who choose to take some or all of their classes on campus rather than online. And, some of the students, as you might expect, are married and holding down part-time or full-time jobs.

I chat with them as they stop by my office on class break describing how they've been up all night with a newborn baby or studying until the wee hours of the morning.

I tell them, I get it.

I went back to college at age 30 to get my bachelor's degree after earning an associate of science degree 10 years earlier. My wife and I moved from Johnstown, Pennsylvania to Lynchburg, Virginia so I could attend Liberty University.

Soon after we got there — surprise! Debbie was pregnant with what would be our first-born, and my first classes were just starting. Debbie worked full time until Ryan was born, while I was a full-time student and worked part time on the air as an announcer and news reporter at the university radio station.

When Ryan was born, Debbie took maternity leave. Here's where the blurry-eyed thing comes in. Not all of my junior college credits transferred, plus Bible/theology courses were a part of the requirements, so I was taking 15 to 17 credit hours each semester. To supplement our income, I not only increased my hours at the radio station, but also took a second part-time job as a church janitor.

One day as I sat in class, dressed in my janitor uniform, the professor

made a statement totally out of the context of her lecture.

“Sometimes you just have to admit you can't do everything.” She was looking at me.

“You talkin' to me?” I said, my speech slurred with fatigue. “Yes, you,” she responded with concern. “I'll be OK,” was my unconvincing response.

One morning after staying up late the night before to study, as I was leaving our rented house for campus, I grabbed a plastic bag at the front door that Debbie had left there and I set it outside for that day's trash pick-up.

When I got home later that day,

she asked me what happened to the new bag of disposable diapers she had purchased the day before. Yikes! We had sometimes used empty disposable diaper bags as trash bags. I'll let you guess where the story goes from there.

So, to all my young, blurry-eyed seminary friends, continue to work as unto the Lord. Graduation day will come, and you will celebrate with photos that will perhaps include you in cap and gown while holding your first-born. Standing next to you is your wonderful supporting wife — who is pregnant with your second child. Better get those resumes out. ■



By Bob Holmes
Senior Writer

That's me in the middle with a couple of CIU seminary students. On my right is Xavier Holmes (see page 5) and his wife Shelah. She is holding their daughter Evelyn and he is holding their son Ishayah. On my left is Jonah Williams and his wife Jordan. She is holding their son Callahan. Xavier is also a security officer at CIU. Jordan is a CIU admissions counselor. Pray for students such as Xavier and Jonah, and others like them, as they study, work jobs, and raise a family.
(Photo by Michael Carter, MC² Photography)





The Most Important Sermon You Will Ever Hear

*By Dr. Terry Powell
Professor Emeritus of Church Ministry*

During 38 years on the faculty, I benefited from sermons in Shortess Chapel delivered by gifted preachers: Stephen Olford; Stuart Briscoe; Bruce Wilkerson; John MacArthur; Robertson McQuilkin; Johnny Miller and George Murray — to name a few. Their messages, along with my pastor's sermons, proved vital to my spiritual formation.

Yet I'm convinced of a key insight pertaining to the value of sermons. The most sin-defeating, hope-instilling, faith-sustaining, soul-nourishing, ministry-motivating sermons we'll ever hear are the ones we preach to ourselves!

The most sin-defeating, hope-instilling, faith-sustaining, soul-nourishing, ministry-motivating sermons we'll ever hear are the ones we preach to ourselves!

What Is “Preaching to Yourself”?

It's the assertive act of combating discouragement, temptation and harmful thought patterns with truth in God's Word. It's giving a biblically informed rebuttal to erroneous thinking, including lies Satan whispers to us.

One Psalmist talked back to depression by pointing himself to a brighter future stemming from faith in God: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation” (Psalm 42:5).

In a Psalm prompted by an experience of treachery, David addressed himself concerning God's character: “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken” (Psalm 62:5-6).

In Psalm 73:26, Asaph, after acknowledging his weakness and failure, reminded himself that God is his source of strength: “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Those examples show three authors talking to themselves. In their time of need they focused on God: who He is, what He has done and what He has pledged to do for His people. What they told themselves rekindled their faith.

Personal Examples of Preaching to Myself

The following examples illustrate this spiritual discipline.

When Discouraged about Ministry

When I'm disheartened over a lack of results, I don't think a Bible teaching responsibility is worth the time and effort it requires. But I talk back to those doubts. I tell myself what God said in Jeremiah 23:29: “Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?” I review Hebrews 4:12: “For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Those verses remind me that God's Word is powerful even when I don't see results. Seeds may be sown that yield fruit later. When I'm weak and inadequate as a servant, I realize that the secret to my usefulness is in the inherent power of the Word I communicate, not within myself.

Fighting Strong Temptations

The enemy whispers that I can't defeat a particular temptation. He reminds me of the times I've failed. He says, “Give up, Terry. You can't resist this forever. Besides, God will forgive you. Relieve the pressure — it will feel so good!”

That's when verses I've memorized scroll across the screen of my mind:

“But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one” (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

That spurs me to pray: “Father, either your power working in me is stronger than this lure, or those Bible promises are lies! I choose to believe they're true. For the sake of your glory in and through me, strengthen me right now so I don't grieve You with sin. Keep your promise to protect and to strengthen me.”

Not a Superficial Cure-all

Preaching God's Word to ourselves isn't a panacea that eliminates pain, spiritual warfare, temperamental frailties or adverse circumstances. Nor will it keep us sinless. But implementing this practice empowers us to sin less and results in more victories over negative thinking than we would otherwise experience.

Just as a preacher studies diligently before delivering a sermon, we'll preach to ourselves more effectively if we regularly delve into and memorize God's Word. ■



Dr. Terry Powell writes a blog on depression and faith at penetratingthedarkness.com. His latest book is “Can You See the Cross from There? Grace and Grit for Sufferers and Sinners.” The book consists of original faith poems and Bible teaching that encourage the reader to appropriate the benefits of Jesus' cross. Multiple chapters significantly expand the concept of preaching to yourself. Contact him at terry.powell@ciu.edu.

7

STEPS *to Understanding* WORLDVIEWS



By Dr. Dave Cashin
Professor Emeritus of
Intercultural Studies

“Sometimes people will end up convicting themselves as they answer the questions and relate it to their lives.”

The Seven Essential Questions

Think of the seven questions as a way to imitate Jesus. It has been said that Jesus posed 303 questions in the New Testament throughout the gospels. Something that stands out about evangelism is that people learn the system to share the gospel, but when they get out there, they get rebuffed. And when they get rejected enough, they just cannot do evangelism the way they want to. That system they learned becomes useless and they lose the motivation inhibiting many Christians from sharing their faith. Because of this, about 20 years ago, I came up with a question method of evangelism. It first started as an element in my classes where I would have students go and interview people to learn about their worldviews.

Worldviews

Worldview relates to assumptions that people make about reality. The seven questions revolve around these basic assumptions of what life is. The seven questions asked are:

- 1 Origins:** Where do humans come from?
- 2 Power:** How do we get power for successful living?
- 3 Purpose:** What is my purpose? What is my destiny? Where am I going?
- 4 Truth:** How do I discern truth from untruth?
- 5 Ethics:** How do I know right from wrong?
- 6 Problem:** What is the nature of humankind’s problem?
- 7 Solution:** What is the solution to humankind’s problem?

This method is designed to make these conversations short and straight to the point. I would ask “would you be interested in answering seven questions about your worldview for me?” After doing this quite literally thousands of times over the last 20 years, I have only encountered one person who said no. Although people are quite skeptical at first, not knowing where the conversation is going, they tend to be open about the questions. A wonderful thing about this is that one can use just a single question at a time and then ask the next question the next time I meet the person. People then tend to give you time to ask the next questions. These seven questions highlight what is important in a person’s life. Am I the product of evolution? Chance? Or am I the product of some creative design? People always think about power and how they can empower themselves to live successful lives.



There is also the question of destiny. People always wonder what the future has in store for them or where they are going. But when you follow Jesus there is always a perfect answer to every single one of these questions.

Truth

Often, when asked how to tell the truth apart from the untruth, no proper answers are given. As for me, I often unpack these questions in simple ways. The simplest form of truth is what you pay attention to and what you ignore. What are the things that are important to you? Whatever is important to you, that is your truth. What authority is authority to you? What do you find persuasive? The answers to these questions are easier for the average person. But the key to asking these questions is having a non-judgmental attitude. As you go through these questions with someone, refrain from telling them whether you agree with them or not. Be there to listen and understand, not to judge them or try to convince them. Your purpose is simply to correctly understand. Write down a quote or two from what a person said on a card and make that a prayer card for your friend.

Sometimes people will end up convicting themselves as they answer the questions and relate it to their lives. Such happened as I spoke with a woman at an airport in Germany. This woman worked as a marketing agent for a cigarette company. I asked her the seven questions and she answered willingly. But when we got to the last two

questions, something shifted. I asked her what she believed to be humankind's problem. To which she answered, "People are so selfish. They don't care about each other, they only care about themselves." But then suddenly she stopped. I knew exactly what was going on at that moment. She was thinking "I told this guy that I was marketing *cancerettes* to young people to make myself wealthy." It was astonishing because I did not have to convict her of sin because she was convicting herself as she answered the question. When we got to the final question, "What is the solution?" she hissed, "There is no solution because humans cannot change!" This was the only time where I had ever disagreed with anybody in a conversation like this. I told her, "That is not true. Look at me, what do I look like?" and she said, "You are a professor. Well established and respected." And I told her, "What would you think if I told you I was a drug addict? And that I spent a lot of time in the back seat of police cars?" After telling her this, she had this astonished look on her face. That is when I told her that people can change, through the gospel of Jesus. Although she was not receptive to the gospel, I believe that the Holy Spirit will be at work in her. I do not usually jump this far that fast, but this is how I use these seven questions to understand other people's worldviews.

Once I have finished the questions I will then ask the person if they would like to hear my answers to the questions. I have never had a single person say "no" to that suggestion. When you share Christian answers to the seven questions, you are sharing the gospel. When I finish this discussion, I will often ask, "Do you have a personal relationship with God, or are you in process?" There are three ways a person can answer. They can say, "I have a relationship with God" and this is likely something one has seen in the answers they gave earlier. They can say, "I'm not interested," in which case we complete our discussion and continue to minister via prayer. But sometimes someone will say "I am in process." That indicates openness to the gospel. This would be the right time to share the gospel again and to challenge the person to "complete the process." ■

Four CIU Alumni Leading the Way in The Great Commission

Columbia International University's mission is to educate students from a biblical worldview to impact the nations with the message of Christ. And by the grace of God, over 24,000 CIU alumni are serving right now in over 160 nations, obeying Jesus' words in Matthew 28:19 to make disciples of all the nations.

While CIU alumni and friends are leaders in evangelistic outreach around the world, four of those CIU alumni are showing the way in the Great Commission through their leadership of strategic organizations.



Ken Katayama
President of Crossover Global
(Bachelor's Degree in Bible 2011;
Master of Arts in Muslim Studies 2021)

Crossover Global is a church-planting organization, focused on providing gospel access to unreached people groups by planting multiplying churches.

Describe your role within your organization?

As the president, I give oversight to our global team by reporting to the board of directors and leading the organization's direction and culture.

What most excites you about the work your ministry is doing for World Evangelization?

We have seen new churches being established among hundreds of unreached people groups. These new communities of believers are the first generation of Christians from Animist, Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim backgrounds living in hard places. Many of these new believers are taking the gospel to new unreached people groups. As of March 2025, we planted 6,000 churches among those unreached people groups.

In what ways did your CIU experience prepare you for leading your ministry?

My degrees at CIU educated me to develop skills in research and application. They helped me learn how to navigate the multicultural and cross-cultural world where I minister today.



Phil O'Day
President and CEO of
Avant Ministries
 (Master of Arts, 2017)

Describe your role within your organization?

My wife Lori and I have served with the organization for 32 years, the first 27 of which were with Camino Global focused on the Spanish-speaking world before Camino's 2019 merger with Avant Ministries.

What most excites you about the work your ministry is doing for World Evangelization?

Avant was among the first sending organizations to bring the gospel to places such as Mali, Ecuador and Central America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Today, I am excited that a significant portion of our work centers on mobilizing Great Commission practitioners from the Global South, from some of the countries where our ministry began 135 years ago.

In what ways did your CIU experience prepare you for leading your ministry?

My time at CIU was perhaps not conventional. It was done partly in residence, but only for a week at a time in the form of intensive courses. A highlight of this format for me was that the content of every intensive course I took mirrored a season of real-world ministry that I was experiencing at the time. It made my CIU education deeply relevant and practical every step of the way.



Luke Perkins
President of Crossworld
 (Bachelor Degrees in Bible and Pastoral Ministries, 2006)

Crossworld is a missions organization of disciple-makers from all professions bringing God's love to life among the least-reached.

Describe your role within your organization?

I provide leadership to our executive team, helping keep a clear image of our vision in front of the organization and our partners and helping guide the overall direction of our work. It also means I'm on Zoom. A lot.

What most excites you about the work your ministry is doing for World Evangelization?

One of our missionaries who works with Muslim refugees in Europe met a woman who told her about a song she heard in her dreams, but she was unfamiliar with its lyrics: "Hallelujah, He has found me." The missionary Googled the song and played the rest of it for this woman: "Hallelujah, I have found Him; Whom my soul so long has craved!" It is an amazing privilege to see our missionaries participating with Him as He is doing His work!

In what ways did your CIU experience prepare you for leading your ministry?

CIU helped ground me in the truth of God's word. Old Testament survey with Dr. Bryan Beyer, Theology with Dr. Andre Rogers, Hermeneutics, Greek, etc. All of these helped shape my confidence in the beauty of the truth.



Steve Richardson
CEO of Pioneers-USA
 (Bachelor of Arts in Bible, 1984;
 Master of Arts in Missions 1985)

Describe your role within your organization?

Pioneers has over 3,000 members who are involved with well over 400 people groups around the world. My primary responsibilities involve overseeing the mobilization, preparation and support of the U.S. members of Pioneers, who constitute a little over half of the international picture.

What most excites you about the work your ministry is doing for World Evangelization?

I am excited about paving "highways" for disciple-making in difficult spiritual terrain. Pioneers partners with thousands of churches to send well-equipped laborers into those places. I think of us as a global network of "spiritual entrepreneurs." We have a vision to engage, as the Lord allows, 250 more unreached people groups over the next 10 years. Seeing that dream realized will mean partnering with many other groups in the body of Christ.

In what ways did your CIU experience prepare you for leading your ministry?

CIU provided lifelong strategic relationships for my wife Arlene (M.A. Teaching 1984) and me. Our prayer times and dorm life led to friendships with others who were going into the ministry and the mission field. Several of these also joined Pioneers and helped to grow the organization into global influence.



When God Writes a Godly Heritage

My Story

BY AYSLEY VIVIAN ('24)

You cannot write your own story, let alone a godly heritage. Christians have Scripture that testifies to this inability of man and the faithfulness of One who is able, that is God alone. My personal heritage testifies to God's faithfulness.

In 2016, my church in Western Australia, where my father was a pastor, celebrated its 40th anniversary — and my grandparents made the trip from the United States to be a part of it. I was so happy to see them. Not just because they are my grandparents, but because they planted my church, Westminster Presbyterian Church Bull Creek, as missionaries in the 1970s. So, not only was I a pastor's daughter, I felt especially honored being the granddaughter of the church planters. Eight years later, I see God has faithfully written godliness into my family's heritage. But it started much earlier than that.

Because of the Ambassador Choir

God had directed my grandparents, "Bubby" and "Papa," to be students at Columbia International University in the 1960s, when it was called Columbia Bible College (CBC). It all began when Bubby's (Barbara Cross, '64) family hosted a delightful member of CBC's Ambassador Choir in the 1950s, after which her mom looked at her and said, "if that is the kind of student CBC produces, you are welcome to study there." She met my grandfather, Papa (David Cross, '64), at CBC, and soon after were married. Papa was ordained in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) and later served with the ministry Mission to the World in Australia and England — Papa as a gifted church-planter and pastor, Bubby as a gifted Bible teacher. They still serve faithfully in both ministries, even in their retirement.



▲ Vivian family at May commencement 2024. (From left) Aynsley's father Mark Vivian, her mother Shelly (Cross) Vivian, her brother Kyle and his wife Shawnte, Aynsley, Grandmother Barbara Cross, Grandfather David Cross.

But, wait! There's more...

But God is not only faithful for a single generation, if so, He could no longer be considered faithful. He continued writing a godly stream of family heritage that flowed through CIU.

God kindly drew Mom (Shelly Cross Vivian, '90) and her sister (Shannon Cross Deal '86) to Himself and to attend CBC.

There, they met their spouses. My aunt and uncle (Carlton Deal, '86) currently serve with an organization in Europe that Carlton founded called Serve the City. Carlton also coordinates the annual European Prayer Breakfast and pastors a church they planted.

Mom and Dad

Mom met Dad (Mark Vivian, '91), a transfer from the University of Florida who discovered a passion for ministry. They were engaged in CBC's library, prior to their graduation. Dad recorded his proposal in a movie they watched in one of the study rooms. Apparently, mom never said yes; she was laughing too much!

I was sad when I learned about the 2012 CIU library fire. After renovations, the library that I studied in was no longer the same host of that proposal. Nevertheless, I loved to think of about that story while hunkering down in the library, huddled over commentaries and papers.

After graduation from CBC and seminary, Dad was a youth pastor in Pennsylvania, where I was born. Soon after, God faithfully called him to a church in Perth, Western Australia — one my grandfather had planted so many years before. My father still pastors there. Mom began teaching at the local Christian School she had attended as a little girl, the school I, too, attended from Pre-K to senior year. My mother still teaches there.

My Turn

God is in the business of preparing and strengthening "jars of clay" (2 Corinthians 4:7) to carry the light of the gospel, often through vocational training. That includes CIU students, who for over a century, graduate desiring to serve Him wherever He calls. So, He continued to weave me and my siblings into our family's godly heritage.



The Vivian family on a trip to check out CIU in 2013. (From left) 11-year-old Aynsley, her brother Kyle, mother Shelly, father Mark, brother Tyler. (Photo provided)

In 2009, I first visited CIU's campus, and in 2013, we moved my brother Kyle (2014) to CIU to pursue a Bible certificate. I remember the old cafeteria (and the less than desirable spaghetti), where I met godly professors my parents raved about, such as Dr. Jack Layman, Dr. Anita Cooper and Dr. Bryan Beyer. People who had faithfully trained my parents would now train my brother. I wanted them to train me too, so I declared at seven years old that CIU was my future college.

"Obedience has a History"

When God called the Israelites to obey Him in the wilderness, He reminded them of His covenant faithfulness toward them. In his book, "A Long Obedience in the Same Direction," Eugene Peterson wrote: "obedience has a history." God did not call His people to blindly follow Him. They knew the character of the God they were following. For us, God's Word records His faithfulness upon which our present, contemporary obedience can stand. So, we too can trust that He is faithful. The psalmist wrote:

"O God, from my youth You have taught me, and I still proclaim Your wondrous deeds." (Psalm 71:17)

By now, you too see God's work in my family — a history of faithfulness that has taught me the ways of the Lord. He brought me to Himself and to the very school I am thankful to say is my alma mater.



Aynsley Vivian poses with President Dr. Bill Jones on graduation day.

But it did not end at my conversion, or at CIU, where God led so many of my family members into ministry. He too directed me to "proclaim (His) might to another generation" (Psalm 71:18), and continue a godly heritage.

I desire women to know what all the earth needs to know: God, as He has revealed Himself. In His faithfulness, He led me to work full time in Youth Ministry at a church with amazingly the same name as the one

from my childhood in Australia — Westminster Presbyterian Church (PCA), in Rock Hill, South Carolina. I teach young women the Word, model Christian living before them, and seek to love them as Christ richly loves me.

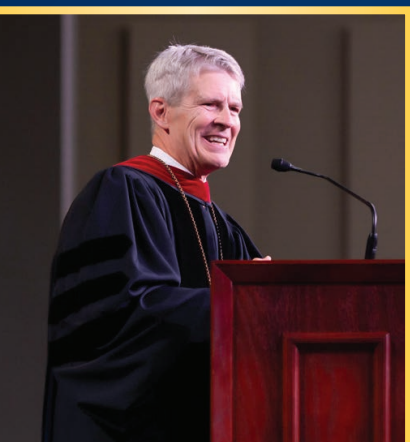
I often don't know why God chose this "jar of clay" to be His vessel, but I come from a godly heritage that shows me God is faithful. ■



COLUMBIA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING 2024

The Inauguration of Dr. Bill Jones was the Highlight of Homecoming 2024

By Brandon Lee, Shoshanna Crompton, and Bob Holmes



Dr. Jones speaks at Inauguration

The inauguration of Columbia International University President Dr. Bill Jones as CIU's eighth president highlighted the Homecoming 2024 weekend filled with celebration and reunion. Alumni from all over the world made their return to CIU's campus, mingling with old friends and meeting current students and faculty.

Jones, who also served as CIU's sixth president from 2007-2017, received warm greetings from faculty, alumni and students as part of the inauguration ceremony. Among

them were KEPHA Institute Dean Dr. Zhiqiu Xu and Student Body President Joel Baumgartner.

"We believe that you are the answer to our prayers," said Xu, referencing the careful process of the Presidential Search Committee.

"We believe in your ability to lead in integrity and passion, and to foster an environment of knowing God and making Him known," added Baumgartner quoting from CIU's motto.

The inaugural address, given by Tobin Cassels, the president of Southeastern

HOMECOMING PRESIDENT'S BANQUET

Later that evening, Jones was joined by supporting friends, faculty and alumni at the Homecoming President's Banquet that included a performance by the CIU Ambassador Choir.

In his Banquet address, Jones emphasized keeping CIU focused on its mission: "CIU educates people from a biblical worldview to impact the nations with the message of Christ."

"We will not compromise ... at least as long as I'm here," said Jones, while giving a nod to former CIU presidents in attendance. "I'm following in their steps. And any variation of staying on track would be an insult to the legacy they have left." ■

MORNING DEVOTIONS

The alumni enjoyed a more intimate setting the next morning while listening to devotions from pastor and popular Christian author **Rob Morgan**, a graduate of the Class of '74. His message centered around the encouragement of 2 Corinthians 4:16, where the Apostle Paul reminds his readers that although outwardly, they may be wasting away, they are being renewed inwardly each day.

"God renews us day by day so that we can do his work, day by day," Morgan said.

"This is how the Lord keeps us from discouragement." ■



President Bill Jones with his wife Debby



Tobin Cassels giving the inaugural address

said Cassels, who has also served as a CIU Board of Trustees member.

In his inaugural response, Jones was quick to credit the administration and faculty for the recent success of CIU, which continues to rise in the annual U.S. News & World Report college and university rankings.

"That is the grace of God, and the result of a hardworking team, a faculty that compares to none, and an incredible student body," declared Jones. The new president also affirmed the CIU mission statement and core values, promising to instill them in students to impact the nations for Christ.

A number of dignitaries were on hand to congratulate Jones including South Carolina U.S. Congressman Joe Wilson who has known Jones for several years.

"Bill is such an inspiration, and then to have Tobin Cassels make such a wonderful presentation, it's just so heartwarming," Wilson said. "I'm so grateful to see the success of CIU — the enrollment — to see the impact that CIU has on the people of the United States and in foreign missions." ■

Freight Lines, Inc., offered insight into Jones' character and impact on other people. Cassels spoke of Jones' gift of evangelism and passion for discipling other men through Bible studies that include marketplace leaders and government officials.

"Until you are under Dr. Jones' teaching, you will never appreciate the giftedness that God has put on him, not only for one-on-one evangelism, but for leading men in Bible study,"



CLASS REUNIONS Dish Pit Memories

Reminiscing with former classmates is a natural part of every homecoming weekend. Sam Tuggy was celebrating the 40th reunion of the Class of 1984 and thinking back to his “buddy” Chet Bitterman, a Wycliffe Bible translator, martyred for his faith in Colombia, South America in 1981. Tuggy said there was a humorous side of Bitterman. He recalled the two of them working in the cafeteria “dish pit.”

“Chet loved to put his hand in the grease — good spaghetti grease or something like that — and then dip it in the tea bucket and with his hand like this —.”

Tuggy held his hand straight up from the elbow and shaped his fingers like a claw.

“When the girls would bring their trays over he would see if he could make them jump!” Tuggy laughed boombly. “He was a lot of fun.” ■





CLASS REUNIONS Insights for Current Students

Cara (Evans) Groene, class of 2013, was a double Psychology and Bible major. After getting her master's degree in Social Work at Boston College, she now works at International Justice Missions, a nonprofit that focuses on anti-trafficking and anti-slavery efforts.

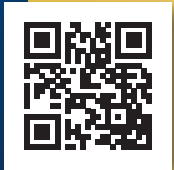
She says she has "been blessed to use (her CIU) degrees in a way that honors God, loves people really well, and has a missional aspect," adding that caring for people who are most vulnerable is something she learned during her time at CIU.

Groene says that after years of prayer that God would provide opportunities for international missions, she will soon be moving with her family to Italy where her husband is being stationed in the military. Her desire there is to bless the other stationed military families and reach unbelievers with the gospel.

She is excited that since her days as a student, CIU now offers "practical degrees that are being used for God's glory, (showing) that mission doesn't have to look like ministry."

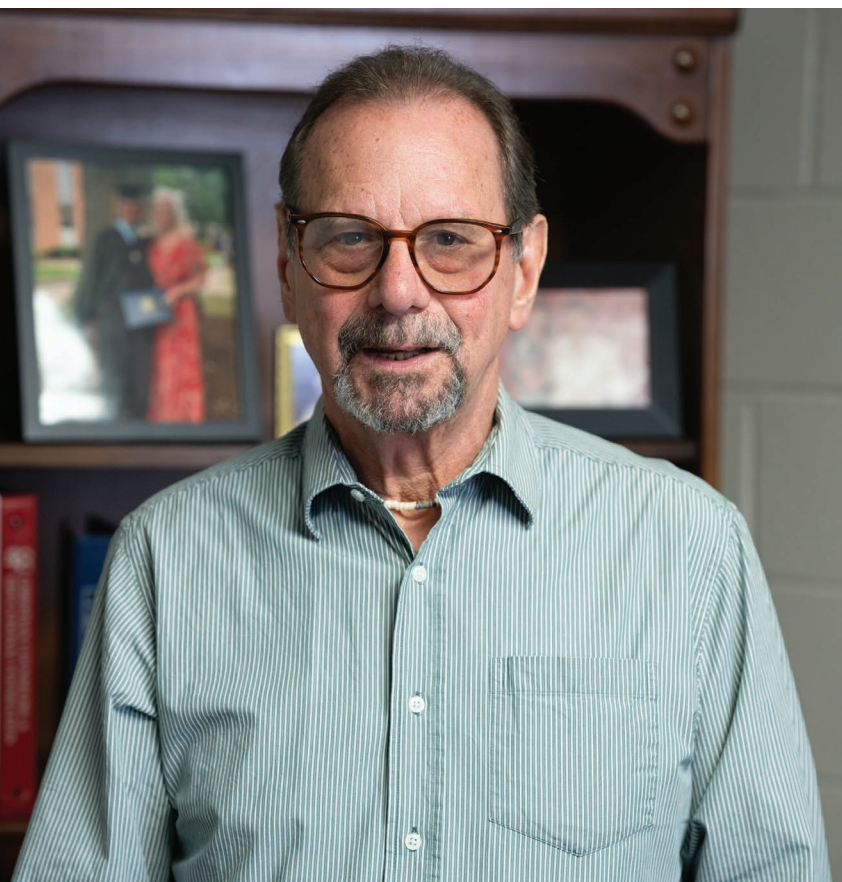
Groene also left a word of wisdom for current students:

"Keep putting God first in all that you do and He will provide what you need." ■



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Thursday, Nov 13: Chapel
Friday, Nov 14: Morning Reunions, Attend a class, Ambassador Choir Afternoon Concert & Evening Banquet
Saturday, Nov 15: Reunions, Morning Devotions & Activities for Children



STEVE MCGEE ('92/'24)

A Bridge of Hope *CIU Alumni Filling the Need for Counseling in Rural SC*

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

Pastor Steve McGee recalls how in an act of kindness, he allowed a man who was trying to overcome drug addiction to sleep in his church study. But after about nine months, McGee discovered the man had been cooking meth inside the church building and then selling it.

"I think that's what drove me to (study) counseling," said McGee, a Columbia International University alumnus who shepherds Hillcrest Church in the small town of Gaston, South Carolina. The church basement now houses Bridge of Hope-Gaston Counseling Center designed to assist people in southern Lexington County, encompassed by the towns of Gaston, Pelion and Swansea.

McGee earned a Master of Divinity degree from CIU in 1989 when it was known as Columbia Bible College. He and his family attended Hillcrest Church when he was a CIU student. After serving on the mission field, he returned to South Carolina in 2013 to become pastor at Hillcrest, a church that had supported his missionary work. But the Gaston area had changed.

"I was shocked at the amount of addiction and drugs," McGee said. "I was trying to minister to drug addicts ... and after a few years of being here I knew I needed to get some more understanding."

That desire for understanding the needs of the people he was trying to reach led him back to his alma mater. He enrolled in CIU's Clinical Counseling program.

"When I looked at the amount of drugs and the amount of alcohol sold in Swansea, Pelion and Gaston and surrounding areas, it was more than any other cities in the whole state of South Carolina," McGee said. "When I looked at all of that, I said we need something here because the closest center for someone to get professional, licensed counseling is at least 30 minutes away."



“

What we hope to do is take this model and expand it to other rural communities.”

—STEVE MCGEE ('92/'24)



In addition, he says most counseling would be \$80 to \$100 per hour, a cost out of reach for most rural Lexington County residents.

“My heartbeat was to get counselors here who would look at this as a ministry as well as to sustain income, but be more affordable than other counselor centers,” McGee said.

The basement of his church was not being used, so he approached the church elders who gave approval to remodel the space for counseling.

A Shared Vision

The vision for a counseling center in rural Lexington County became a key part of McGee’s Master of Counseling degree — it fulfilled an advocacy project within the degree. And he was not alone in that vision. Joining him in the project was classmate Linnette Mullin, who is today the assistant director of Bridge of Hope-Gaston. She earned her bachelor’s degree in Psychology from CIU in 2021 before entering CIU’s Master of Arts in Clinical Counseling program where she met McGee.

“We saw this as an opportunity to minister through clinical counseling coming from a biblical worldview,” said Mullin who didn’t begin college until after she was a mother of four children.

Bridge of Hope-Gaston is a satellite location of the original Bridge of Hope Counseling Center at First Baptist Church of Lexington, located in the county seat. It is led by another CIU alumnus, Paul Bishop who has a master’s degree in Intercultural Studies (1998) and a master’s degree in Counseling (2001). He also had a vision for expanding Bridge of Hope. He says there were already 14 counselors at First Baptist of Lexington and they were running out of

room when the idea for a satellite location was discussed. That’s when Steve McGee shared with Bishop his vision for a counseling center in Gaston and wanted to be a part of what Bishop was doing in Lexington.

“The Lord just brought it together,” said Bishop. “It’s a God thing.”

But the CIU influence at Bridge of Hope-Gaston runs even deeper. Three other counselors at the site are CIU counseling alumni, each with their area of expertise:

- **Steve McGee** 1 focuses on addictions, depression, anxiety, grief, PTSD, trauma, and marriage.
- **Linnette Mullin** 2 has a heart for women who have experienced relationship trauma. Her other areas of focus include women-specific counseling, depression, grief, anxiety, trauma, and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (long-term trauma).

The others are:

- **Juliana Cook** 3 who also earned a Master of Arts in Counseling from CIU in May 2024. Her main area of focus is children and families.
- **Karis Johnson** 4 earned her bachelor’s degree in Psychology from CIU in 2020 and went on to achieve the Master of Arts in Counseling in 2023. She is focused on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), trauma, and anxiety.
- **Craig Boxwell** 5 walked the graduation stage of CIU’s Shortess Chapel in 2024 with McGee and Mullin. He earned a master’s degree in Pastoral and Care and Counseling. His focus is pre-marital counseling, addictions, and spiritual growth.

Continue on page 22 ▶



Counseling room for children and families

“It’s phenomenal the way that God has brought this team together,” McGee said, a team shaped by CIU. “My education there was phenomenal with the professors.”

And McGee is especially “happy and thrilled” that during the two decades that passed between earning his two CIU degrees, “CIU has not left the foundation of Scripture.”

“They have a high view of Scripture which is very important to me,” McGee stressed, plus from a practical aspect he notes, “The (counseling professors) have their own practices. So, they’re not just talking theory.”

“Phenomenal” Professors

As for Mullin, she says, “I don’t think I could have attended any other school and have been prepared for what we’re wanting to do.

“I didn’t want to go to any other grad school because I wanted to keep an integrated biblical perspective in my training, and high quality in the clinical department, as well,” Mullin added while noting particular Clinical Counseling professors who influenced her.



Counseling area at Bridge of Hope

“Dr. Seth Scott has been phenomenal — a huge part of my growing and learning experience. And Dr. Steve Johnson — he is in a class of his own. He is so wise. He is so humble. And he is so ready to help.”

Getting Out The Word

McGee and Mullin are getting the word out about the Bridge of Hope-Gaston. For example, they have visited the Gaston Police Department where officers were excited knowing they could refer troubled residents to counselors. They have made their services known to the local school district office and the Lexington Baptist Association. They even set up a booth at the annual Collard Festival in Gaston.

Meanwhile, McGee is still thinking like a missionary, and already looking beyond Gaston.

“What we hope to do is take this model and expand it to other rural communities,” McGee said. “When you look demographically at the United States, the most overlooked population for missions is the rural communities. There are a lot of churches like (Hillcrest Church) who have property that is paid for and have space. It would be a model to go into these communities and bring the counseling to them, and eventually evangelize as God opens up the doors.”

Back at the Bridge of Hope parent location in Lexington, Paul Bishop, who like McGee is also a former missionary, says today’s #1 mission field is mental health.

“(People) are not knocking on doors saying ‘How do I get saved?’” Bishop explains. “But they are coming saying ‘I have anxiety, or substance abuse.’ That’s where we can point them to the real solution.” ■

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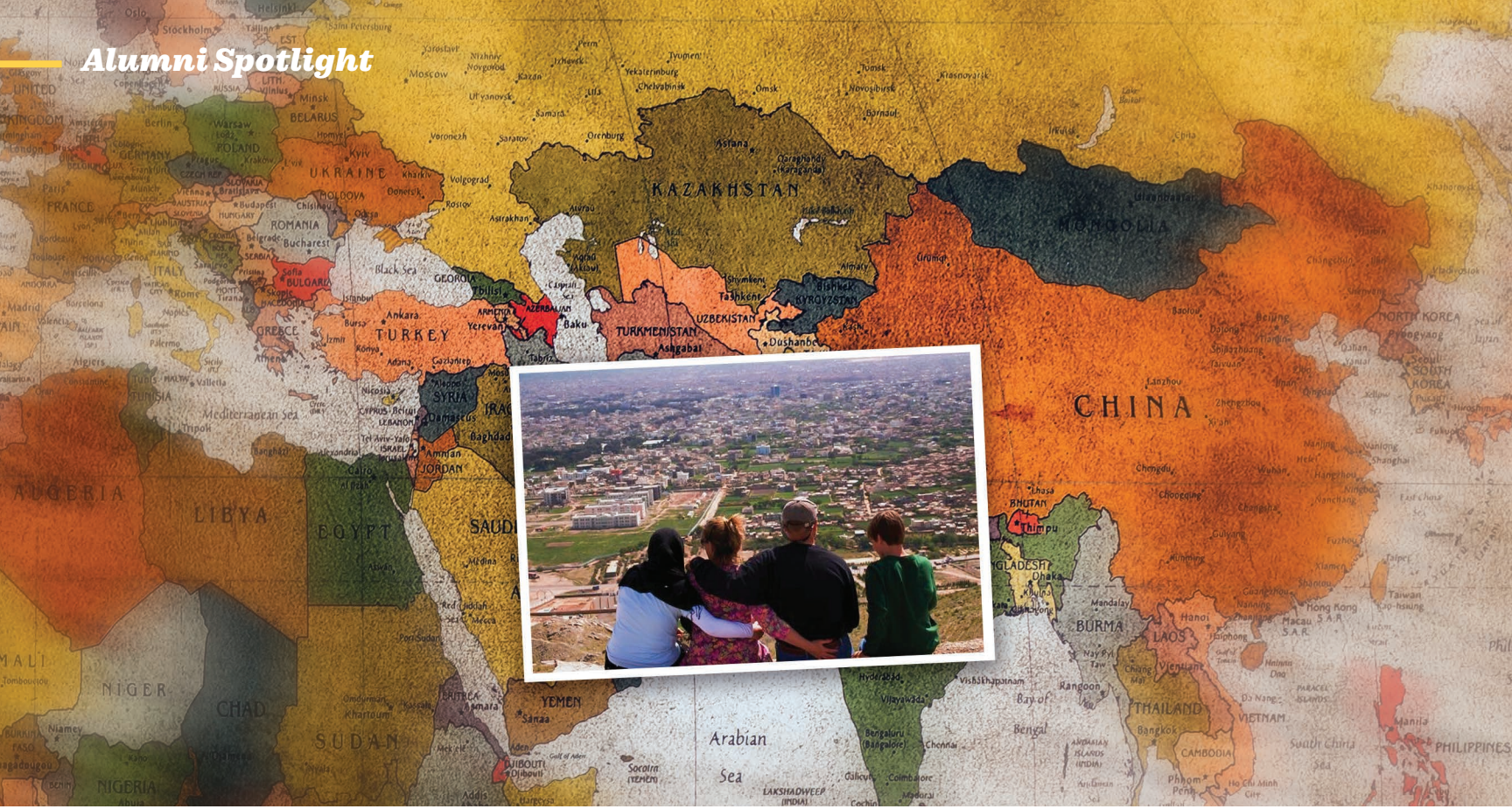


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Judd and Debbie McKinnon and their children view their city.

A Story About “Ordinary People”

CIU Alumnus and Wife Served Two Decades Among “Unreached”

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

Judd and Debbie McKinnon would be the first to describe themselves as “ordinary people” as God used them for two decades among the unreached. And while they served as “missionaries” for 20 years in a Muslim nation in Central Asia, meeting critical needs of the people through a non-governmental organization (NGO), they stress that they are no better than other Christ-followers. “We realized we could go overseas when we realized it just took ordinary people — that you didn’t have to be a rock star to be a missionary,” said Judd. In an online interview from their new assignment based in the United States with the International Mission Board (IMB), Judd and Debbie say the call to the mission field began early in their marriage when they met “ordinary people” who were missionaries and one day Judd and Debbie together came to the same conclusion. “All the excuses are gone. We can do it,” Judd recalled.

Enter CIU

But Judd knew he would need a master’s degree and Debbie assisted by searching Christian schools. “The one that stood out was Columbia Biblical Seminary (now CIU Seminary & School of Counseling). It was THE missions school,” Debbie emphasized, adding that they soon visited the campus. “It was great. It was great,” added Judd describing the visit. As Judd slowly worked on his master’s degree over the next 10 years, he was employed in a couple of key CIU departments. During those years Debbie was an instructor at CIU and the couple raised two children. The McKinnons say a decade of absorbing the CIU culture was growing their desire for the mission field. “Being at CIU, you have all those great speakers at Chapel, so you are constantly hearing what God is doing around the world,” Debbie said.

“No Visible Christian Witness”

So, after hearing about each area of the world still in need of the gospel, they would pray, “Lord, are you calling us there?” “Then silence,” Debbie recalled. But one thing they knew for sure. They wanted to go to an area where “there was no visible Christian witness,” Debbie added.

Through their Columbia-area church, they began hearing more about such a country in Central Asia that a trio of men from the church had just visited on a survey trip. While Judd was out of town, Debbie heard their report.

“They were showing a PowerPoint and everything was khaki-colored brown,” Debbie recalled. “It just looked so dismal. And all the (local) people in the pictures were not smiling. Everybody was sad. It was just so depressing. They talked about how oppressive it was for women. I was sitting there thinking, ‘Oh, Lord, who would ever want to go there?’”

But Debbie calls that her “aha” moment, and sensed the Lord speaking to her:

“You said you were willing to go anywhere. Are you willing to go there?”

That’s when she called Judd and told him they needed to see if God would open the door to this Muslim country that was closed to missionaries. But only days later, as Judd puts it, “God did something huge.” World events would open up the country enough for the McKinnons to begin the process of entering.

“From that moment the green light went on. There was no turning back,” Judd said.

“That call on our lives was so strong that we never doubted it. It sustained us for almost 20 years,” Debbie added. “We never questioned His call on us to go there through good times and hard times.”

“There was no Plan B,” said Judd.

Reflecting Christ

So, how would the McKinnons minister to the people they were called to through their NGO? They provided government-approved services to the local people. Because they had doctors and nurses on their team, they started with a medical project. Later they offered vocational training classes and community development programs. They also met needs of marginalized groups within the culture. In their office they employed a sizeable staff of locals — people who were Muslim.

“We wanted our work to reflect Christ. That was very important to us,” Judd said. “We didn’t take bribes. Often our papers that needed signed went to bottom of piles because we didn’t give bribes. We wanted to do things that honored the Lord. That was part of our testimony, especially to our staff who saw us day after day.”

“Doing this work, we had access to people we otherwise would not have access to,” Debbie added. “We were able to build relationships and have people into our home, where we shared The Good News with them.”

They also witnessed through prayer in Jesus’ name. “We were never turned down,” said Debbie.

Judd tells how he was asked by his office cleaning lady, a Muslim, to pray that God would heal a girl on another floor who was in their NGO vocational training class. She was suffering from a serious skin disease on her hand and could not work. Judd found the woman sitting among her classmates and asked if he could pray for her in Jesus’ name.



▲ One of the McKinnon’s favorite Central Asian foods: Aush.



▲ Meeting the needs of even the youngest among them.

“The room was silent,” Judd said.

The next day Judd asked the cleaning lady if the woman with the skin disease returned to class.

“Of course she’s back. Her hand is healed!” the cleaning lady responded as if the answer was obvious.

“(The cleaning lady) had the faith to believe that our God could heal — and He did,” Judd said.

And yes, the McKinnons saw conversions to Christ, but they are guarded in their comments about them. While the government prohibits churches from forming, there are believers who meet secretly in groups. Some are women who were disciplined by Debbie.

“They were on fire,” Debbie said. “It was encouraging for me, that as I disciplined them, they had tools, so that if ever I left, they could continue to study God’s word ... they knew how to ask questions and dig deeper.”

Next?

And it was not just the McKinnons who were ministering in their country. Judd recalls how during a meeting of fellow missionaries, he was amazed to note that several of them were CIU alumni — all committed to reaching “hard places.”

“It was very encouraging to us,” said Judd, quickly adding, “And there’s still that potential.”

“Who from CIU will take our place?” asked Debbie.

After all, it only takes “ordinary people.” ■

AMY REEVES ('01)

Passionate and Prepared for Mission

CIU and Ben Lippen Alumna says: "I always wanted to do this"

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

Tucked away about a block off of Lexington, South Carolina's Main Street is the bustling Mission Lexington thrift store, where the folks behind the checkout counter smile and laugh and seem to know a number of the customers by name.

Maybe that's because there is a big smile and warm handshake behind the scenes belonging to Mission Lexington Executive Director Amy Reeves, a 2001 alumna of CIU and a 1993 alumna of Ben Lippen School, CIU's Christian Pre-K to 12th grade college preparatory school.

But much more than a thrift store, Mission Lexington is described on its website as "the hub of care for those in crisis in Lexington County," assisting needy families and individuals with life essentials such as food, clothing and shelter, as well as other resources and guidance.

Love Them Like Christ

From her office where the screen saver of a large wall-mounted computer monitor rotates Bible verses, Reeves emphasizes that Mission Lexington, which was founded in 1946 by four local churches, is faith-based. The Mission still partners with local churches with the motto, "Glorifying God by serving our neighbors in crisis."

"One of the biggest compliments we get as a mission is, 'I had hope when I left, I saw an example of Jesus' love, a little bit of my dignity was restored, I felt much better leaving than when I came in,'" Reeves said recalling the words she hears from those the mission serves. "I think our faith-based aspect helps in that ... we want to love them the way Christ loves us."



“
The preparation began at Ben Lippen and as a Psychology and Bible major at CIU.”

—AMY REEVES ('01)

Reeves oversees 31 employees and 250 volunteers. In 2023, over 39,000 needs were met ranging from rehousing a blended family of six to providing interview clothes to a dad trying to provide for his family.

Passionate

Reeves was in the commercial real estate business for 24 years before coming to Mission Lexington, first as the director of community outreach. She was named executive director in September of 2024. In a news release announcing Reeves' new position, Mission Lexington Board Chairman Nate Gibson said the board was not only focused on hiring an executive director with the necessary skills and experience, "but more importantly, someone who is *passionate* about who and why we serve. It became very evident God has been *preparing* Amy for this for many years."

The passion began when Reeves was a child.

"I always wanted to do this," Reeves said as her voice cracked through tears.

She recalls how as a child her life ambition was to help those in need and prayed about it.

"I think it has always been in my wiring, and to seek an answer to that prayer."

And even during her two-plus decades in commercial real estate she would pray, "God, I know there is something more that you want me here for."

So, these days, when she has a moment to reflect on her new role, she is amazed.

"It's kind of crazy I'm doing this now," her voice softening through the tears.

Preparation: Ben Lippen and CIU

The preparation began at Ben Lippen and as a Psychology and Bible major at CIU.

"Ben Lippen was foundational in weaving faith into your everyday life," Reeves said, noting her extra-curricular activities in athletics, choir and retreats. "It was instrumental in how to live Christ in anything and everything you do.

"CIU sharpened those skills and really built upon the

knowledge of how to do that," noting the humble influence of psychology professors Al McKechnie and Steve Farra, and humanities professor Jack Layman.

She remembers apologetics and hermeneutics courses that helped her "get the Bible outside the covers ... bringing it into our world. There were so many good classes."

But standing out in her mind was one particular speech class taught by Dr. Bryan Beyer, where he emphasized the importance of remembering the names of the people you meet, and demonstrated it on the spot by remembering the names of every student in the large class.

"That exercise taught me the importance of being present with the person you are talking to and being focused," Reeves said noting it has become a part of her leadership style at Mission Lexington. "When someone comes in, you have to stop, and you have to be intentional. You've got to give them the focus, time and attention."

Prayers and a Hug

That was demonstrated when a woman came to Mission Lexington after her son was diagnosed with cancer. She was not a client looking for food, clothing, shelter or other social services. She was just a regular shopper in the thrift store.

Reeves said the woman knew someone at Mission Lexington would pray with her, that she would get a hug, and that it would be genuine and compassionate.

"We brought her in here and we prayed with her, we sat and we listened and she was better when she left." Reeves said.

"She just needed to be loved on. If that's our ministry, and that's what we're doing at the end of the day, that's fantastic. Come here if you need prayers and a hug. We'll do that too." ■



Volunteers pack boxes for those in need



Mission Lexington Operations Director Ron Williams receives a donation.



Customers are met with a warm smile from volunteer Marcy Serby at the Thrift Store.



The CIU Rams women's volleyball team won its fourth consecutive Appalachian Athletic Conference (AAC) Regular-Season Championship by sweeping Reinhardt (GA) 25-23, 25-15, 25-21. It is the Rams' third straight outright regular-season crown, as they shared the honor with Bryan (TN) as co-champions in 2021. They also won their third straight AAC tournament title. The Rams reached the NAIA Championship Opening Round and ultimately ended their season in the National

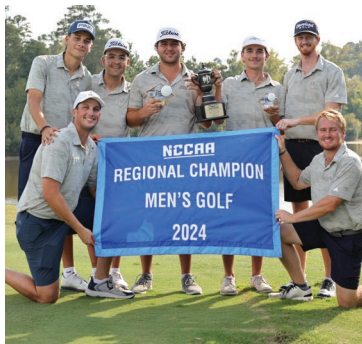
Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) Championship semifinals.

Head Coach Katie Weiss now holds a 38-2 conference record in two years at the helm of the women's volleyball program. She earned her first NCCAA South Region Coach of the Year award after guiding her team to a 35-4 record and a 19-1 record in the AAC.

The Rams have not lost a regular-season match at home since the 2020 season. ■



CIU volleyball head coach Katie Weiss



CIU Rams golf seized their second consecutive National Christian College Athletics Association (NCCAA) South Region title in September. On top of reeling in the hardware, the Rams mastered the greens at the Bartram Trail Golf Course in Evans, Georgia, shattering the 18-hole CIU team score record-low, posting a 278. The score is nine strokes less than the Ram's previous low score of 287.

Andrew Haarlow took home the title of

individual champion as the North Carolina native shot a career-best 68 in round two for a 36-hole mark of 140.

"What a day!" said Head Coach Jake Montgomery. "Anytime you can break a school record, it's a special day, but doing it to clinch a national championship berth makes it all the more special."

The Rams finished third in the NCCAA Championship, their highest finish since 2021, recording a 298 in the final round. ■



WILL KELLY SETS CIU BASKETBALL RECORD

NAMED PLAYER OF THE WEEK BY LOCAL NEWS STATION

“It’s all thanks to God. I give Him the glory.”

That’s what Columbia International University basketball standout Will Kelly told Columbia TV station WACH FOX 57 after he set a home court record with 43 points in a 98-89 win against Montreat College on February 5. It was also a personal best for the junior guard who was named the Player of the Week by WACH FOX.

Kelly, a Business Administration major from Belmont, North Carolina, also pointed to his teammates and Coach Tony Stockman for his record night and the team’s winning record this season, saying they are like brothers.

“It’s so much easier to play basketball when you want to see the person next to you do great,” Kelly said. “We believe in everybody. That’s what makes us such a good team — that love we have for one another. It’s amazing. It feels good.”

One week later, Kelly was named the NAIA Men’s Basketball Offensive Player of the Week. In a two-game stretch, Kelly averaged 33.5 points per game, shot 62.1% from the field, 60% from deep, and 88% at the charity stripe, putting up 67 points. ■

Junior CIU basketball player **Will Kelly** is a Business Administration major from Belmont, NC. ▶



NEW DIRECTOR OF TRACK AND FIELD AND CROSS-COUNTRY HAS PROVEN WINNING RECORD

Benny Morgan joins CIU from Wilson High School in Florence, South Carolina where under his three years of leadership, the Wilson Tigers track and field and cross-country programs thrived. Notable accomplishments include winning the boys’ Virtual 4-A State Championship during the COVID-shortened season and the girls’ cross-country team achieving state finalist status. Morgan further left his mark on the Wilson girls’ cross-country program by guiding an individual state finalist to a top-20 finish in South Carolina.

At the collegiate level, Morgan served as the head coach at Coker University in Hartsville, South Carolina from 2013 to 2017, where the Cobras earned 15 All-NCAA Southeast Region honors and saw three NCAA Division II Academic All-Americans.

CIU Athletics Director Stefan Vasiloff said that Morgan’s “heart for serving God, serving his family, and serving student-athletes was evident in every conversation,” he has had with him. “I am fired up to see how he will positively impact the lives of our young men and women at CIU.”

Morgan says he chose CIU to serve God “in a faith-filled environment,” and wants to bring “more talented student-athletes to CIU in the future to continue propelling the program to national heights and champions.” ■



Remembering CAROLYN ORR

Missionary to the Quichua

By Sandra Archer Young, Ph.D.

“I wasn’t ‘called’ to the Quichuas, I just slid into them.” These words appear in Carolyn Orr’s personal writings which were penned across the years and shared with family members. A 1947 graduate of Columbia Bible College, Orr earned a bachelor’s degree in biblical education before pursuing translation studies with Wycliffe Bible Translators. She was only 27 when she arrived in Ecuador to translate the Bible for Quichua Indians, and she stayed half a century. Her remarkable legacy of ministry to the Quichua is one of courage, devotion, and fruit that remains.

Carolyn Orr was born in Brownsville, Texas in 1925. Growing up a mile from the Mexican border, she and her siblings frequently visited the homes of their Mexican friends to eat freshly baked tortillas. These experiences, along with stories told by her grandmother, a missionary in Siam (now Thailand), made it natural for Orr to engage with persons of a different culture.

“With Grandma’s accounts of life in a foreign country, it wasn’t hard for me to begin imagining myself caring for orphans in Africa, being a nurse in Mexico where my missionary-doctor uncle worked, or being a teacher in some exotic snowy area of the world,” Orr recalled.

In 1943 Orr enrolled at Columbia Bible College. According to Orr, President Robert C. McQuilkin “challenged

students to be willing to go anywhere God would send us.” Later she wrote that during her freshman year, “God spoke to me (a clear inner voice) saying ‘You’re going to go overseas as a missionary.’” After teaching two years in a North Carolina public school, she resigned to study linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. She then applied and was accepted to train with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Her studies included 12 weeks of Jungle Camp Training in southern Mexico followed by four weeks of training with a Mazatecan language group.

With initial studies completed, Orr, still in her 20s, flew alone to Peru in 1952. She stayed for a year and then boarded an Italian liner to Ecuador to continue her studies in the Quichua language. Much of her time was devoted to language study, visiting mission stations in the Andes and the Amazon where Ecuador Quichua was spoken,

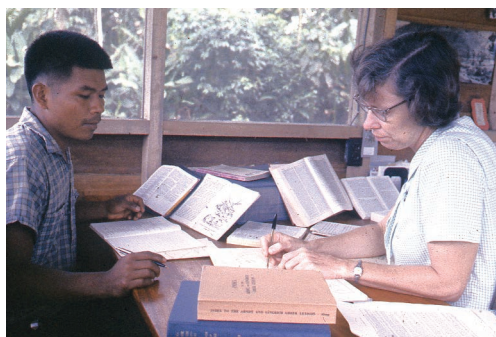
“Orr gave generously to CIU due to the impact of the college upon her own life.”

—Diane Mull, CIU Vice President of Advancement

assisting others, and “team duties.” During this period, she roomed briefly with Elisabeth Elliot, the wife of martyr Jim Elliot who was also in Ecuador studying Quichua grammar.

But Orr inwardly was not satisfied. “Here I was, young, ready to conquer the world,” she wrote but her team’s response was “only after your daily work is completed.” In her first five years in South America, she only spent 14 months engaging with a tribe. Orr left for her first furlough in the United States where she pursued a master’s degree at Indiana University and reunited with her sponsor, Grace Baptist Church in Ft. Worth, Texas.

After the first furlough, however, Orr found what she longed for: full-time translation work. She boarded a JAARS single-engine plane bound for Wycliffe’s newly established jungle station in Ecuador. Now she recognized the value of teamwork. And here her reported “slide” into the Quichua commenced. It was a delight working with them daily and she gladly endured mosquitoes and welcomed unfamiliar foods. Her house with its thatched roof and palm-bark walls hosted “Quichua families camped out on my large porch.” Orr also consistently portrayed the Quichua as friendly: “They take care of us. They do our carpenter work for us, and when they go hunting they bring meat back to us, or fish, or bananas and papaya from their gardens.”



Carolyn Orr (Courtesy of Wycliffe Bible Translators)

In this environment where every day guaranteed high temperatures and stifling humidity, Orr and others transcribed a number of texts into Quichua dialects, beginning with dictionaries and story books. There were many challenges inherent in translating eight distinct Quichua dialects; complete Bibles were available only in two of the eight dialects. Yet by 1983, Orr had translated the New Testament books from Luke to Revelation in Napo Quichua. She then assisted Pastaza Quichua in translating the New Testament into their dialect in 1992.

Orr returned to Ecuador several times after her retirement and completed a hymn book, the book of Ruth, and other projects. Later she returned to Ecuador to participate in a canoe trip and check dialect variations.

Carolyn Orr passed away in August of 2024 at the age of 98. At her passing, she bequeathed a substantial gift to CIU. CIU promptly established the Carolyn Orr Endowed Scholarship Fund, a perpetual scholarship reserved for students entering vocational mission service.

Diane Mull, Vice President of Advancement at CIU, met Orr in 2017. According to Mull, “Orr gave generously to CIU due to the impact of the college upon her own life. She also wanted to make education at CIU affordable.” During their visit, Orr asked “How can I pray for students? What does CIU need? How can I be a part of CIU’s mission?”

These simple questions are answered through examining her long and productive ministry. We give God thanks for a brave and committed woman of God who loved the Lord, loved CIU, and loved translation work. ■



Gifts of remembrance can be made to the Carolyn Orr Endowed Scholarship Fund at Columbia International University. *If interested in learning more about estate planning contact Frank Bedell at Frank.Bedell@ciu.edu or (803) 807-5001.*

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JOHN LAWING ('52) is the former art-production director at Christianity Today magazine and retired journalism professor at Regent University. [✉ johnlawing@verizon.net](mailto:johnlawing@verizon.net)

GROVER DEVAULT ('53) has published his memories “My Life as an Army Chaplain.” It is an historical account of his chaplaincy during the Vietnam conflict, the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York City, and the Lancaster Amish school shooting. [✉ revgdltc@gmail.com](mailto:revgdltc@gmail.com)

EDWIN YAMAUCHI ('56) – Edwin is professor emeritus of history at Miami University in Ohio. His memoir “An Asian American Ancient Historian and Biblical Scholar” is the story of a Japanese-American family that began with immigrants from Okinawa, who came to Hawaii to work on sugar plantations. [✉ yamauce@miamioh.edu](mailto:yamauce@miamioh.edu)

BONG RO ('60) has published the book, “Asian Church History” based on his five decades of teaching church history and missions at seminaries in Asia and the West. [✉ rohonolulu@gmail.com](mailto:rohonolulu@gmail.com)

DARYL AND JANET (JOHNSON) ('64) DALE
Janet is retired and serving as mentor and spiritual director to Christian ministry leaders in the United States and overseas. [✉ darylandjandale@gmail.com](mailto:darylandjandale@gmail.com)

JOHN HARMON ('70) is providing financial services to Missionary Air Group which trains pilots who support mission work. [✉ jc9harmon@gmail.com](mailto:jc9harmon@gmail.com)

DAVID WILSON ('70) continues ministering with Worldwide Proclamation showing the Jesus film and preaching the gospel in Congo (DRC), Paraguay, Kenya, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nepal and Brazil. [✉ david.wilson@bellsouth.net](mailto:david.wilson@bellsouth.net)

GEORGE ('75) AND JUDY (EURIGA) ('75) WALLER
George and Judy have retired from Berean Christian School in Knoxville, Tennessee where George was headmaster and Judy was a first-grade teacher. George had a lung transplant in February 2022 due to COVID complications. They would like to thank each of you who have prayed

for his recovery and continued healing. [✉ jwaller1@juno.com](mailto:jwaller1@juno.com)

1 DAVID ('77) AND JERRI (MOORE) ('78) BANKS – David is the conference superintendent for the 402 Global Methodist Churches in North Carolina. David and Jerri live in New Bern, North Carolina. [✉ david.arnold.banks@gmail.com](mailto:david.arnold.banks@gmail.com)

LESA (SHACKELFORD) ENGELTHALER ('80) is a speaker and author who has written for publications such as The Dallas Morning News and Christianity Today. Her latest work is “Joan of Art,” an inspiring story about a girl who harnesses the power of friendship and the bravery of her namesake, Joan of Arc, to embrace her creative nature. [✉ lesa.engelthaler@gmail.com](mailto:lesa.engelthaler@gmail.com)

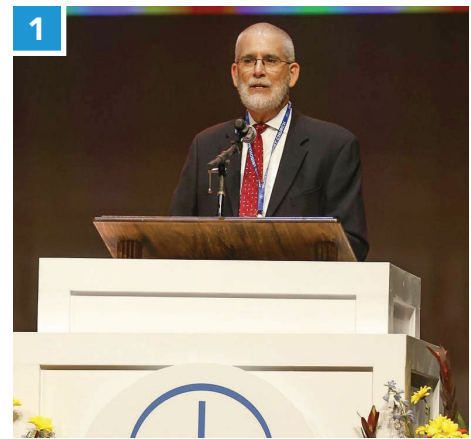
DIETRICH ('81) AND JAN (YODER) ('81) SCHINDLER lived in Germany for 37 years where they planted five churches. They have three grown children and four grandsons. [✉ dietrichgschindler@gmail.com](mailto:dietrichgschindler@gmail.com)

ED ('83) AND SONDR (HINSON) ('81) POLLEY are retired and helping their daughter Elizabeth take care of her husband who requires 24/7 care, as well as their granddaughter and grandson. [✉ edpolley@gmail.com](mailto:edpolley@gmail.com)

2 LEROY ('82) AND DEBORAH (MITCHELL) ('82) ZUMACK retired from Greater Europe Mission (GEM) where they served for 39 years. They lived in the Paris area where they planted a church, and in Lille. Leroy has also served as a prison chaplain. [✉ lzumack@gmail.com](mailto:lzumack@gmail.com)

PAUL ('83) AND CLARE HUDSON served with SIM in Ethiopia, Nepal and Thailand over the last 30 years. Paul now teaches and writes about medical missions, and just finished a book titled “Healthcare and the Mission of God: Finding Joy in the Crucible of Ministry.” www.pauljudson.com

3 SUE GIBBINGS ('86) is retired in South Africa, and is grateful to God that in her senior years, God surprised her by sending her a husband, Patrick Swan. [✉ suegibbings@gmail.com](mailto:suegibbings@gmail.com)



4 RANDY ('87) AND LEIGHANN (MORRIS) ('86) PFANNENSTIEL have retired; Randy from law enforcement and Leighann from health and human services. They enjoy working in their local church, outreach to refugees and travelling across the country to visit their grandchildren. ✉ pfanmail@yahoo.com



SUSAN (CANNON) EVANS ('91) moved to Kansas to live with her son and family after her husband, Jim, passed away in 2022. ✉ susan_evans_5@msn.com

5 JEFF ('97) AND VIVIAN KROLL – After over 38 years of full-time ministry, Jeff and Vivian are retiring to the Charlotte, North Carolina area to be near the majority of their grandchildren. ✉ jeff.d.kroll@gmail.com

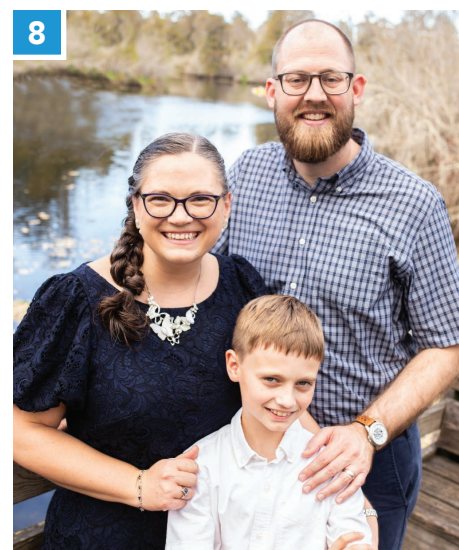


6 BROOKS ('07/'13) AND RICKI ('15) (BLAKENEY) HEARD met at CIU in 2011, married in 2018, and moved to Houston, Texas. Brooks manages the education program for the Spiritual Care Department at MD Anderson. Ricki recently graduated from Thurgood Marshall School of Law with her Juris Doctorate. They have two children. Brooks and Ricki serve on the pastoral staff at St. Johns United Methodist Church. ✉ rickiheard@outlook.com

DAVID GRIMSLEY ('09) is involved in a new venture called Ovatient, a virtual-first telehealth company. He was recently awarded a 2024 Project Management Institute (PMI) Chapter Leadership Impact Award for Southeast North America-Caribbean. ✉ Dgrimsley865@gmail.com



7 BETSY KILLINS ('09) is grateful to have completed 10 years serving globally and locally with Downline Ministries, offering a live and virtual nine-month discipleship program, an emerging leader program, and training overseas. She now works with World Relief Memphis — welcoming the nations that God is bringing to them. ✉ bjkillins@gmail.com



8 BEN ('11) AND MELODY (SECRET) ('11) HATCHER served with Cru for 13 years. Ben has recently established a virtual therapy business while Melody focuses on home management and educating their 11-year-old son. ✉ becauseurlvely@gmail.com

9 ZAC ('14/'17) SEYMOUR is a counselor at Aster Springs in Columbus, Ohio, helping people overcome eating disorders. He and his wife, **LINDSEY (EMO) ('16) SEYMOUR** have two sons, Augustine and Nehemiah. ✉ Zac.seymour908@gmail.com



UPDATE YOUR ALUMNI PROFILE
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10 LARRY ('17/'21) AND ALESIA SHAW

relocated from the Midlands of South Carolina to eastern North Carolina to join the pastoral staff at Greenville First Church. With the move, they are now much closer to Larry's mother and other family. ✉ larry.shaw77@gmail.com

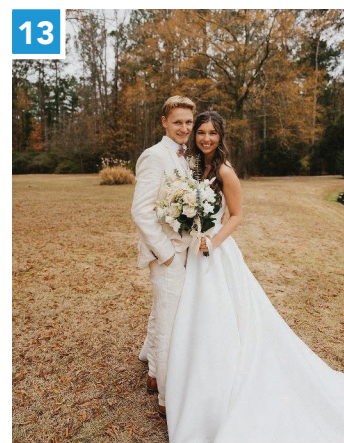
11 WILL ('20) AND OLIVIA (FLEMING) ('20)

BEERS welcomed William "Liam" Beers to their family in December 2024. They are serving in Albania. ✉ williambeers@protonmail.com

12 BRENDA KING ('22) is enjoying life and seeking employment in the healthcare field. ✉ bjking922@gmail.com

MEHARI TEDLA KORCHO ('22) published his doctoral dissertation: "Ethiopian Diaspora Churches on Mission: An Intergenerational Perspective on Ethiopian Churches in the United States." ✉ meharikorcho@oci.org

13 ALLISON (TROYER) ('23) AND SAMMY HARBIN ('25) married in December 2024. They are employed at a children's hospital. ✉ troyerallie@gmail.com



IN MEMORIAM

MARY RHYNE AVINGER ('42) – Nov. 2024

ELIZABETH HAINS BALL ('48) – Feb. 2024

GWEN HUMPHRIES GRAY ('50) – July 2024

VIRGINIA "GINNY" HOOKER ('51) – Oct. 2024

LEROY DARE ('51) – Feb. 2025

MARY RUTH WISE ('51) – Sept. 2024

JANICE SMITH BRADBURY ('52) – Jan. 2025

JANICE JONES ENGELS ('52) – Apr. 2024

PATRICIA MOYER AUSTIN ('53) – Jan. 2024

MILDRED GROENDYKE DREESSEN ('53) – Sept. 2024

BERNITA SKELTON PRESTON ('53) – Mar. 2024

EUGENE "GENE" SIEMER ('53) – Jan. 2025

MARK HARMELING ('54) – Nov. 2024

SHIRLEY HAM ROGERS ('54) – Jan. 2023

PEGGY TAYLOR TALLEY ('55) – Oct. 2023

JOSEPH NEWTON ('56) – Nov. 2023

NAOMI HILDEBRAND WALKWITZ ('56) – Jun. 2024

IRA ELLIS ('57) – Oct. 2024

RASHIE KENNEDY JR. ('57) – Jan. 2024

RAYMOND KUTZ ('58) – Oct. 2024

RICHARD MATTHEWS ('58) – May 2024

ANNABELLE STOVER ROPP ('59) – Apr. 2024

JAMES "JIM" HUGHES ('60) – Jan. 2025

MARY LOWE BRUTON ('61) – Oct. 2024

ANN SMITH ('61) – Feb. 2023

C. FRED VENABLE ('61) – Sept. 2024

ELIZABETH MARSHALL BELL ('62) – Feb. 2025

BARBARA BRENEMAN HURD ('62) – Dec. 2024

IAN BARNES ('63) – Sept. 2024

DOROTHY HIGHTSHUE CLARK ('63) – May 2023

FRANK KIERAN ('63) – Dec. 2023

VERNON BORTH ('64) – Jan. 2025

CARLOS CONCHA ('64) – Nov. 2024

ALLEN HEATHERLY ('64) – Oct. 2024

SANDRA OSBORNE INMAN ('64) – Jan. 2024

ALICE PROPST SISSON ('64) – Nov. 2024

WILLIAM WEBSTER ('64) – Jan. 2025

MARILYN HERGET ('65) – Apr. 2024

HOWARD KIMBALL ('65) – Dec. 2024

JOHN MCCONAUGHY ('65) – Sept. 2024

WILLIAM "BILL" LUBKEMANN ('66) – Sept. 2024

LEONARD WRIGHT ('68) – Aug. 2024

JERRY PINKERTON ('71) – Nov. 2024

WILLIAM WEBSTER ('72) – Jan. 2025

REBECCA DEROSA INGLETT ('73) – Nov. 2024

RICHARD YOUNG ('73) – Oct. 2024

PHILIP ESTES ('74) – Dec. 2024

ROBERT BAUGH ('75) – Apr. 2023

TITUS KIVUNZI ('76) – July 2024

ROBERT "BOB" LONG ('76) – Oct. 2024

NELL TILGHMAN ESTES ('77) – Nov. 2024

LYRIS ARCHIBALD ('78) – Nov. 2024

HENRY "GIL" BAKER ('78) – Apr. 2024

MICHAEL "MIKE" POTTS ('81) – Dec. 2024

JAMES "JIM" COAD ('83) – Dec. 2024

JOHN RIVENBARK ('83) – June 2023

CLARENCE KOEPLIN ('98) – Sept. 2024

MELISSA WOLFGANG ('01) – Oct. 2024

KIM CHILDS ('06) – Dec. 2024

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Pete and Molly Bain

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