

CIU

TODAY

SPRING 2024



**COLUMBIA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY'S
EIGHTH PRESIDENT**

Dr. William H. Jones
& FIRST LADY *Debby Jones*

CIU **TODAY**

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Greta Clinton

SENIOR WRITER

Bob Holmes

ALUMNI EDITOR

Peggy Lee Manoogian

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Dr. Trevor Castor, Jenea Bradshaw, Brandon Lee, Jack Horchler, Peggy Lee Manoogian, Joanna Mower

DESIGNER

Seth Berry

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Noah Allard, Kierston Smith, Jared Hill, Alexis Deason, Chariti Mealing, Macey Drye, Seth Berry, Bob Holmes

EDITING ASSISTANT

Lydia Hill

Direct all inquiries to:

CIU Today magazine
7435 Monticello Road
Columbia, SC 29203
(803) 807-5535
publicrelations@ciu.edu

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On the cover: CIU's eighth president Dr. William H. Jones and his wife Debby.



Follow CIU



Features

- 10 STUDENT SURVEY:** *What is CIU's top strength?*
- 12 CIU's 100TH ANNIVERSARY** *Grand Finale Recap*
- 18 DR. BILL JONES** *Ready for Second Term as CIU President*

Departments

- 5 THE HEADLINES**
- 20 ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS**
- 28 RAMS ATHLETICS**
- 30 ADVANCEMENT**
- 32 CLASS NOTES**



Announcing
THE *Inauguration* OF

DR. WILLIAM H. JONES

AS THE EIGHTH PRESIDENT OF
COLUMBIA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Friday, November 1, 2024
10:30 a.m.

Shortess Chapel, CIU Campus
No RSVP Required

and

HOMECOMING WEEKEND 2024

November 1-2, 2024



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For a full list of our new traditional undergraduate scholarships and for more information:

CIU.EDU/AID

Nursing News

CIU Nursing Program receives important accreditation

The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) has granted initial accreditation to CIU's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. The accreditation covers both the traditional BSN program offered on the CIU campus and the RN to BSN program offered online. The accreditation decision is retroactive to April 2023 to cover all students who have graduated following CIU's successful CCNE site visit last spring.

The accreditation validates that CIU holds to the highest standards in nursing education, giving CIU graduates who are seeking advanced degrees an advantage when being accepted into master's degree and doctoral programs.

The nursing program is also accredited by The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Association for Biblical Higher Education (ABHE). ■



▶ Student using the Nursing Simulation Center



Dr. Johnny Miller and wife Jeanne by the Nursing Simulation Center

A Great Honor

NURSING SIMULATION CENTER NAMED IN HONOR OF FORMER CIU FIRST LADY

As former Columbia International University President Dr. Johnny Miller entered the Simulation Center on a tour of the CIU School of Nursing, a wry smile came over his face as he checked out the Center's new name plate next to the Simulation Center's door. Then he waited for the reaction from his wife Jeanne as she read the name plate:

Jeanne Miller
Nursing Simulation Center

Tears came to the eyes of the former nurse who was surrounded by other family members, nursing students and CIU staff and administrators who were in on the surprise of the Center's new name.

"I was in shock," Mrs. Miller said afterward. "I didn't know it would be there."

Dr. Miller, CIU's fourth president from 1991-1999, honored his wife with the naming, noting her eight years of nursing during their early years of marriage when she served in hospital intensive care units in Arizona, Illinois and Texas. ■



U.S. News & World Report

CIU ranks high for social mobility, value

The 2023-2024 U.S. News & World Report rankings show Columbia International University **#5 for Social Mobility among Regional Universities South**, the second straight year for the position.

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 **Best Value for Regional Universities South at #14**, up one spot from a year ago.

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.

Overall, CIU remains **in the Top 50 for Regional Universities South at #45**. ■

The Gift of Prayer

CIU PRESIDENT, BOARD MEMBER PLAY KEY ROLES AT SC PRAYER BREAKFAST

Columbia International University had an important role in the 62nd Annual South Carolina Prayer Breakfast in February.

The emcee was CIU President **Dr. Bill Jones** and the keynote speaker was CIU Board of Trustees member **Tobin Cassels**, chairman of Southeastern Freight Lines. State and local officials, along with faith leaders, joined in the event, including South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster.

The organizer of the event is the South Carolina Prayer Fellowship. Their purpose is "to promote the gift of prayer," and "set aside ... differences and focus on building meaningful relationships centered around the work and person of Jesus Christ."

In his keynote address, Cassels discussed deepening love for God and others by pointing the audience to Jesus' words in Matthew 22:37-40 (ESV):

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "You shall love your

neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

After Cassels' address, Jones asked the audience a question that he also asked of himself, "Is the God living in me manifesting himself through me?"

CIU staff member Frank Bedell said afterward that it was heartwarming to see the political, business and faith communities come together.

"Politics were set aside for a brief time to pray for our nation, recognizing that God is central to everything that we do, transcending Republicans and Democrats," Bedell said. ■



Photo courtesy of SC State Sen. Michael Fanning

A Leader in Education

CONGRATULATIONS TO DR. LYNN HOEKSTRA

Congratulations to Columbia International University Education Program Director **Dr. Lynn Hoekstra**. She was honored with the 2023 South Carolina Project Learning Tree (PLT) Leadership in Education Award from the Forestry Association of South Carolina.

Project Learning Tree is an award-winning environmental education program designed for teachers and other educators,



parents and community leaders working with youth from preschool through grade 12. PLT uses trees and forests as windows on the world to advance environmental literacy and promote stewardship to students while fostering professional development among the educators who use it.

Hoekstra was recognized with the same honor in 2019, making her the first two-time honoree since the award's inception in 1997. ■

What a Legacy

Surgeon served in remote villages of Africa; CIU's oldest alumnus passes away at age 106

Dr. William J. Barnett, MD, affectionately known as "Dr. Bill," graduated from CIU in 1937, served



as a missionary surgeon in several hospitals in Tanzania, Kenya and the Comoro Islands. He was named CIU Alumnus of the Year in 1996.

After surgical and anesthesia training in the U.S. Army, Barnett dedicated himself to becoming a very capable physician who performed most types of surgery, obstetrics and primary care in remote villages. His family recounts how in Africa, he would study and formulate instruments for surgeries coming up the next day. At some periods in his career, he was the only physician or surgeon in an area. He worked with excellent nurse leaders to develop two nursing schools, served as a school doctor, administered outlying clinics, and functioned in innumerable ways, including renovating buildings and installing generators. He began his missionary work with his wife Laura in 1950. He retired in 1990.

Dr. Bill Barnett is survived by six children and their spouses, 26 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren. ■



Joy to the World

CIU AMBASSADOR CHOIR SETS THE SPIRIT FOR SALVATION ARMY

With the singing of "Joy to the World," The Columbia International University Ambassador Choir brought the spirit of the holiday season to the steps of the South Carolina Statehouse in Columbia.

Just a few days away from Thanksgiving, the Choir sang as the Salvation Army of the Midlands kicked-off their 2023 Red Kettle and Angel Tree campaigns.

Major Mark Craddock with the Salvation Army introduced the Ambassador Choir as "a phenomenal group of musicians... composed of students from all around the world and includes students from almost every major on the Columbia International University campus, who unite to worship Jesus Christ through the beautiful avenue of music. Their style is one that exudes passion, conviction and attention to detail." ■

Pausing to remember a faithful friend: Board member, Marvin Schuster

Marvin Schuster, a Board of Trustees member and key supporter of CIU, passed into the arms of our Lord, October 1, 2023. Residing in Columbus, Georgia, Marvin Schuster was a successful entrepreneur who helped to build a family business, Schuster Enterprises. In addition to serving as a Board member, Schuster was a generous supporter of CIU. He started the Bertha Smith endowed scholarship to remember that impactful missionary to China. The Schuster building is named in his honor. He and his wife, Ruth, received CIU's highest honor in 2022, the Global Impact award. CIU extends heartfelt condolences to Mrs. Ruth Schuster and the Schuster family. ■



Highest Honor

CIU alumnus presented with SC's highest civilian honor

"I was flabbergasted ... totally unprepared and unsuspecting."

That's how Columbia International University alumnus Dr. Cecil Beach described his thoughts when South Carolina Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette presented him with The Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's highest civilian honor. It is presented in recognition of a lifetime of extraordinary achievement, service and contributions on a national or statewide scale.

For Beach, that service has been primarily in the field of Christian education as an administrator and teacher, as well as serving for 42 years on the board of the SC Association of Christian Schools (SCACS). It was at the 2024 SCACS conference that Beach was surprised with the honor.

"I had no clue that was coming," Beach said in a phone interview, making clear that CIU helped give him a foundation for life. Beach graduated in 1965, when CIU was known as Columbia Bible College or CBC. He recalls godly and revered professors,

such as Frank Sells and Buck Hatch, as having a huge impact on his life, and challenging his nominal Christianity.

"God just broke me into tiny pieces, and I just surrendered to Him everything without any reservation at all," Beach said.

He also noted how the foundational expectations of daily life at CBC was exactly what he needed at that time in his life, beginning with the wake-up bell in the dorms at 6:00 a.m.

"At 6:30 you were sitting at your desk with an open Bible," Beach said, recalling breakfast at 7:00 in the Dining Hall and sitting in class by 8:00.

"That routine, since then, has basically been my routine, except I'm getting up at 5:30 now," Beach says with a laugh.

Beach's long career in Christian education includes administrative roles at Sumter Bible Church & Christian School in Sumter, South Carolina and Northside Christian School in North Charleston, South Carolina. Prior to those roles, Beach was in ministry with the Navigators for a year and worked



for five years in management for Belk Department Stores. Along the way, he earned a master's degree in Spanish from the University of Virginia and a Doctor of Education from Bob Jones University.

And as you might expect, Beach today is a big advocate of Christian education, "believing in it wholeheartedly."

"The big deal is teaching a biblical worldview on history, science, math and politics, because that's not part of the culture anymore," Beach said. "Most of the kids that are going to be pastors 20 years from now are sitting in Christian schools right now. The next president of the United States is sitting in a classroom somewhere. It might as well be here (in a Christian school). ■"

"A Beautiful Thing"

CIU RECEIVES BANNER OF CONDOLENCES FROM BJU

In an act of kindness from one Christian university to another, Columbia International University student leadership accepted a large banner of condolences signed by students at Bob Jones University (BJU) in Greenville, South Carolina following the death of CIU graduate

student Patricia Wolfe.

Wolfe, a student in the CIU Seminary & School of Counseling, passed away from injuries she suffered on February 15 as she walked to class on the CIU campus.

BJU student leaders Aya Cathey and Abigail Bergmann drove the 100

miles from Greenville to Columbia to meet CIU Student Body President Miles Raven and members of his executive team and deliver the banner. Also meeting them were nearly two dozen graduate students of the CIU Counseling Program who were classmates of Wolfe.

Raven said he was "touched" as the banner was unfurled.

"I started tearing up. It's a beautiful thing to have people that we don't know praying for us, who are our family in Christ, who would put this (banner) together and bring it all the way here," Raven said. "It's a beautiful thing."

Raven said the banner will be given to Wolfe's husband.

At her funeral, Wolfe was remembered as empathetic, courageous, intelligent and a true friend. ■"





By Bob Holmes
Senior Writer

Remembering Mom and the Sanctity of Human Life

With Mother's Day coming up in May, I had a flashback to my teenage years, the years just after the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe decision made abortion legal nationwide for nearly 50 years, until the Court overturned Roe in the Dobbs case in 2022.

So, rewind to 1973. My mother never had a driver's license, but I had a 1965 Ford Fairlane 500 passed down to me from an older sister. So, at age 17, the deal was mom would pay for the gas in my car, as long as I made myself available to her whenever she needed a ride. While some teens would be embarrassed to be seen driving around with their mother, mom and I got along great. Except for that one day...

As I pulled the car up to the curb at our house, we had just heard a news story about abortion on the car radio. My comment was, "Well, if a woman doesn't want to have a baby why force her to have a baby?"

What came next left a lasting

impression on me. I can't remember mom's exact words, but it was something to the effect, "I can't believe I raised someone who would think like that!"

Then she slammed the car door as hard as she could and walked toward the house leaving me still behind the wheel stinging from the words of a woman who birthed me and my four older sisters and lost a sixth child in utero.

When I was in my early 20s and the Lord saved me, my eyes were opened to how He views the sanctity of human life from the preborn to the aged.

God even reveals how intimately He knows us in the womb. He told the prophet Jeremiah:

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
And before you were born I consecrated you;
I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5 ESV)*

As David marveled on God's omniscience, he wrote in Psalm 139:13-14 (ESV):

*"For You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother's womb.
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well."*

Unfortunately, even some Christian denominations and their leaders and pastors struggle with how to approach the life issue. I'm happy to say that at Columbia International University, the position is clear. The employee handbook states:

"CIU is firmly committed to the fact that human life begins at conception, that human beings are made in the image of God, and that the Bible clearly forbids the wanton taking of human life. Our ministry opposes abortion on demand."

Made in the image of God. That thought alone should give us pause to consider the sanctity of human life at any stage of life.

Perhaps there is a young person in your sphere of influence who needs to hear your passion on the subject, just as mom did in her own way for me. And then go further. Lead him or her to the Scriptures that proclaim the sanctity of human life, as well as eternal life in Christ. ■

STUDENT SURVEY:

What is CIU's top strength?

A recent student satisfaction survey identified CIU's top strength as **"My relationship with God has been strengthened"** and as the factor most important to CIU students.

What specifically would lead students to such a response? We asked. And here is what we found out.



"I cannot even put into words how the Lord has changed me since I've been at CIU. God has used this community of caring fellow students and incredible professors to reveal Himself to me in incredible ways. He has shown me His beauty, His truth, His love. I have learned what it means to know about God and, more importantly, to really know God."

HARRISON BURNETTE – Double major in Music and Biblical Studies



"I met (Professor) Sam Rubinson in my second year when I took the Applied Adventure Education course. That same semester I began attending a home fellowship group that was often held at his house. During this time, we would occasionally sit down together and talk for a while, and I appreciated how he was able to speak to me on my level, in way that I could understand. He made me feel heard and was able to encourage me greatly."

ETHAN ROBINSON – Bible major, Class of '23



"[The professors and staff members] saw much potential in me, poured into me, and have gotten me out of my shell to serve alongside them and teach me what it truly means to be kingdom-minded. They have constantly given me sound godly advice, and that has helped me grow so much spiritually."

KYRA LEDWELL – Graduate student, Clinical Counseling



“While at CIU, I strengthened my spiritual connection with God and gained a deeper understanding of my theological beliefs and the Bible. CIU is truly an incredible environment that has greatly influenced my personal development. I am incredibly grateful for having discovered the truth found in Christ during my time here, largely due to the meaningful conversations with fellow students, professors, and mentors who invested in my growth.”

EMILIA NIEDZIELSKA – Communication major from Cracow, Poland



“All of the Bible and theology classes have challenged me to go deeper in my walk with Christ and have impacted how I share Christ with others. Through being here I have grown in the aspect of wanting to better understand the Scriptures and be a true servant-hearted believer.”

CHARITI MEALING – Communication major



“I have spent more time with the people on my [softball] team than anyone else at CIU, and the relationships that I have formed with my teammates I will never forget. They have pushed me to be a better person on and off the field and have walked with me through my most difficult moments.”

MACEY DRYE – Athlete and Psychology major



“Coming here and being surrounded by students and professors who are so passionate about going deep daily into their relationships with God, inspired and challenged me to take my walk more seriously. I wanted a closeness for myself that was between me and the Lord. Together with the people and the Bible classes, I have increased my understanding and have been equipped with the skills I need to delve deeper into the Word of God on my own.”

JENEA BRADSHAW – Media Arts and Bible major



“CIU as a community facilitates spiritual growth because of the incredible people that are here, the faculty, staff and student body all have the understanding that the purpose of being here ultimately is to know God and to make Him known. A lot of times God has shown me His love for me through the people that He brings into my life and I can honestly say, through attending CIU, God has shown His love for me in that way abundantly.”

MILES RAVEN – Student Body President, Psychology major



Grand



Finale



What a Weekend!

CIU Celebrates with 100th Anniversary Grand Finale

By Bob Holmes, Jenea Bradshaw and Brandon Lee

Paul Tripp says he and his wife Luella “love the atmosphere” of their alma mater, 51 years after they graduated from Columbia International University, when it was known as Columbia Bible College.

Tripp is one of CIU’s best-known alumni. The author of 30 books on the Christian life was the keynote speaker for CIU’s 100th anniversary Grand Finale Thursday through Saturday, Nov. 2-4.

Surrounded by dozens of well-wishers following his address at a Gala celebration, Tripp said he is pleased to see that CIU still emphasizes a biblical worldview “that’s rooted in Scripture, and rooted in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ ... and now being applied to all these areas of study,” noting CIU’s expansion of program offerings. “It’s very exciting. The things that are important haven’t changed ... and the students have bought into it. That’s very special.”

Speaking to a packed house in the Moore Fitness Center on Friday, Tripp’s Gala message centered on the wonders of being a child of God.

“As much as this gathering is about 100 wonderful years of a God-centered institution of higher learning, this gathering represents something deeper than that. It represents our inclusion in the family of God ... included in the most wonderful story that has ever been told ... the grand redemptive purpose of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

Then, beginning in the book of Genesis, Tripp subtly began reciting from a biblical study that he and probably most of the alumni in the room had learned while at CIU, “The Progress of Redemption.” It’s attributed to revered CIU Professor Buck Hatch, a 1939 CIU graduate, who later served the school as teacher, counselor and administrator for over 40 years.

“Whenever I think of long-term influence, it’s Buck Hatch’s Progress of Redemption,” Tripp said after the Gala. “I think many of us came [to CIU] as students thinking the Bible is a collection of stories, and [Buck Hatch] said, ‘no, no, no, no, no. This is one story.’ We got ahold of that and it became the way that I think about Scripture.”

Hall of Faith Induction

Speaking of **Buck Hatch**, he was one of five honorees inducted into CIU’s new Hall of Faith, individuals who have demonstrated significant Kingdom impact, a commitment to CIU’s motto “To Know Him and to Make Him Known” and have embodied CIU’s core values. The other inductees are:

The Praying Women who gathered regularly in the early 20th century to specifically ask God for a Bible school in Columbia.

Joy Ridderhof, one of the first CIU graduates in 1925, and founder of Gospel Recordings, using creative means to deliver the gospel to undereducated and underdeveloped regions of the world.

Cliff Bedell, a former missionary to the Philippines, who taught his well-known Romans class for 36 years.

Dr. Kevin McWilliams, a CIU alumnus who is a former missionary to the West Indies, and a current CIU professor since 1996.

After the Gala, McWilliams, the only living Hall of Faith inductee, said the Lord has blessed him in many ways during his time at CIU.

“Arriving at CIU almost 50 years ago, I learned so much about the Bible from amazing professors and faculty, and it has stuck with me my whole life through ministering, pastoring and teaching,” McWilliams said.

The Ambassador Choir and Laura Story's stories

The Gala was followed by a concert featuring the Ambassador Choir, old and new. About 35 Ambassador Choir alumni joined with the current Ambassador Choir, led by former Ambassador Choir Director **Dr. David Osterlund**, affectionately known over the years as “Doc O.” He led the combined choir in singing the CIU Alma Mater, as well as an old Charles Wesley hymn that was sung regularly in the early year of the school, “Faith Mighty Faith.”

*Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees
And looks to that alone;
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries: It shall be done!
And cries: It shall be done!
And cries: It shall be done!
Laughs at impossibilities
And cries: It shall be done!*

What most of the audience didn't see was that while the choir sang on the stage of Shortess Chapel, quietly taking a seat at the piano behind them was 2003 CIU alumnus and Grammy-Award winner **Laura Story**.

“I guess it's me now,” Story joked as the choir left the stage.

She told humorous stories about why it took her eight years to get her bachelor's degree, and how much has changed since she was a student, noting the drum set on the stage.

Today, Story is a worship leader at Perimeter Church in suburban Atlanta and credits CIU for preparing her for ministry.

“The ministry training I got here — I get to mentor women, teach Bible studies, lead worship services, all sorts of things. It's my dream job.”

Flags and Fireworks

Friday began with flags and ended with fireworks. Students, alumni, faculty and staff participated in an international flag parade down CIU's International Boulevard, carrying flags representing 160 nations where CIU alumni work and minister. A bagpiper led the way playing well-known hymns, while at the rear of the parade was a familiar figure and a different, but well-known sound.

“Bagpipes?” mused CIU Professor Emeritus Dr. Bryan Beyer to those lined along the parade route. That's when he drew a breath and sounded his ram horn, familiar to decades of CIU students who have studied under his Old Testament teaching.

Friday ended with a stunning fireworks display over the athletic fields. But that did not signal the end of the celebration.

But wait, there's more!

On Saturday, Nov. 4, Alumni Relations hosted a breakfast in the cafeteria where CIU alumnus and author **Rob Morgan** from the Class of '74, spoke an encouraging and challenging word on the Victorious Christian Life, a CIU core value.

Morgan described how people and the teachings at CIU shaped his life and his witness for the gospel. But Morgan's main focus was on 1 John 5:4, “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (ESV).

Morgan said the world is the domain of and under the power of the devil, and “as a school, as an institution, as individuals, as churches, as pastors in our pulpits, this is no time to be intimidated, and this is no time to be silent ... we have got to speak truth to power, truth to academia, truth to culture, speak truth in our pulpits without fear and with love, but we cannot give a single inch.”

Class reunions were then the order of the day. Celebrating at this combination 100th anniversary celebration/homecoming was the class of 1973, commemorating their 50th reunion. Among them were Pam and Fred Tuggy.

“Back in the '70s, when we were here at Homecoming, we would see these little white-haired people walking around, stumbling and tottering and thinking, ‘That will never be us,’ and here we are,” joked Pam. “But our class meeting together has been a blessing for us. We were talking about how God has brought us through all these wonderful things and all these horrible things, and He is still there, always there to the end. And that's one of the things that we learned here: God will always be there. Always faithful.”

The class of '73 closed their reunion by singing “God Be with You 'til We Meet Again.” ■



Paul Tripp



Firework display over CIU's athletic fields



Rob Morgan



The Pine View Praying Women

A legacy lives on 100 years later

By Jenea Bradshaw

*“All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer...”
Acts 1:14 (ESV)*

Allison Troyer and Vanessa Smith have taken this Scripture verse to heart. Every Sunday evening, they open their home in Columbia International University’s Pine View Apartments to other CIU women to join them in a time of prayer and Bible study.

To learn of a group of women regularly praying on the CIU campus, it’s natural for those who know CIU’s history, to think back 100 years to another small group of praying women — the women headed up by Emily Dick in the early 1920s, who had a vision for a Bible school in the South. That vision, bolstered by prayer, is CIU.

But the Pine View women’s tie to CIU’s origins is even closer when you consider that Troyer’s grandmother and Smith’s aunt were two members of the original Praying Women. While they are inspired by and admire their ancestors, the Pine View Praying Women consider themselves their

own entity, with the spirit of a new generation yielding to the Lord.

Troyer and Smith established this current group of Praying Women with the desire to pray for CIU, unreached people groups and the personal requests of those in attendance.

“I felt God place on my heart last year to start a prayer group,” Troyer said. “Since there was not a group to join in the dorm, I felt led to begin one where we have a focused time of prayer, a time of reading God’s word, and a time of fellowship.”

The group originally met in Founders dorm (named for the original Praying Women), until they moved to the Pine View Apartments.

One typical Sunday evening found Troyer and Smith offering popcorn and tea to their guests. The ladies then sat in a circle on the living room floor and opened with prayer, asking God for insight from Esther chapter 2 that they were about to study. Each person took their turn reading a handful of verses

and then had a discussion on what was read.

Afterward, prayer requests were exchanged, and each woman offered up petitions for one specific need. One woman prayed on behalf of CIU and the school’s search for a new president. Another prayed over CIU Rams athletics — for the athletes’ safety, health and that they honor the Lord with their skill. Another lifted up the missionaries for their faithful task of making Christ known to unreached people groups across the globe and for the missionaries’ safety. Another prayed for the student body and for the personal requests and struggles of each member of the group.

All this was done in the spirit of another verse that the women take to heart:

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people” Ephesians 6:18 (NIV). ■





Back Together Again!

November's 100th anniversary celebration was also a time for class reunions.

The whole family joined in for a fun time, as children and grandchildren played in the bouncy house or had their faces painted. Classes from the 1980s also celebrated with a reunion in August.





1974-78 reunion



Classmates greeting



1963 Betty Concha



CIU Board Member Edith Parks and Ruth Butler Sims



Face painting



1983 reunion



Seminary reunion



August 1980s reunion

Inauguration / Homecoming Nov. 1-2, 2024
Don't miss it! Visit ciu.edu/hc for details.





Executive Vice President Dr. Rick Christman places his hands on Dr. Bill Jones as he leads in prayer



Dr. William H. Jones



Ready for Second Term as CIU President

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

Assisted by student writer Jack Horchler

“Why did I want to take it? It is an opportunity to serve. I love serving our great CIU.”

That’s how Dr. Bill Jones responded when asked about becoming president of Columbia International University for the second time.

Jones took the helm once again on Feb. 1 after previously serving as CIU president from 2007-2017. The CIU Board of Trustees approached Jones, who was currently serving as chancellor, about becoming president again after a six-month presidential

“Dr. Bill Jones has a rich history serving Columbia International University and the community of Columbia.”

—HANS FINZEL, CIU BOARD CHAIRMAN

search ended without clear confirmation from the Holy Spirit.

“Dr. Bill Jones has a rich history serving Columbia International University and the community of Columbia,” said Board Chairman Hans Finzel. “We could not be more thrilled at his appointment as we enter our second century of impacting the nations with the message of Christ.”

In his previous term as president, Jones initiated CIU’s first fully online degree program, as well as the Kepha Institute, which now has approximately 850 students studying online in one of four master’s degree programs in East Asia. CIU’s Cook School of Business began under Jones as well as intercollegiate athletics, the addition of six new buildings and the tripling of the CIU endowment.

Jones was recognized for his service in the community by South Carolina when he was awarded the Order of the Palmetto in 2019, the state’s highest honor. Speaking of the community, there are now 300 members in his online Bible Study course. He was also awarded the Key to the City of Columbia in 2017. Having a passion for spreading the Christian faith, Jones co-founded Crossover Global in 1987, an organization that has planted approximately 4,000 churches around the world.

Always Ready

In an interview with CIU Today, Jones says this second opportunity was not on his radar, but when offered the position he has always “been willing to step into any role they wanted me to.”

“Stepping into president is a lot different this time than it was last time. Last time I had no clue what to expect, this time I do,” Jones said with slight chuckle in his voice. “It’s a joy seeing students learn, seeing students graduate, seeing students learn to serve as either professional ministers or ministering professionals — it’s an honor.”

An Incredible Team of Leaders

During a Chapel Q&A with students, Jones was asked what he will do differently in his second presidency. His answer was to do a better job of getting “out of the way, and letting God do what He does so well.” He also pointed to “an incredible team of leaders on the faculty and staff.”

CIU Professor Emeritus Dr. Bryan Beyer, who served alongside Jones in various capacities for 35 years, says despite Jones’ many accomplishments during his first term, he does not take credit for any of it.

“He was quick to commend what the team members did and celebrate what the team did,” said Beyer who also now serves as a CIU board member. “Now ultimately, he does

want Someone to receive the credit — he wants the Lord Jesus Christ to receive the credit, the honor and glory for all that happens in and through CIU and our graduates.”

No Deviation from Biblical Values

With some Christian universities and colleges drifting from their biblical heritage and moorings, Jones was asked by CIU Today how CIU can stay true to its mission and core values. His answer was firm.

“As long as I have the privilege to serve as president, we are not going to deviate from those [biblical] values. We must educate students from a biblical worldview so they can impact the nations with the message of Christ,” Jones said, repeating CIU’s mission statement. “I don’t care what kind of income they make, I care what kind of impact they make.”

A Campus Culture of Humility

Another aspect of staying true to CIU’s biblical heritage is campus culture, which Jones says is determined by the people of the organization.

“So, the quickest way to change a culture is who you hire and who you fire,” Jones said. “We want [faculty and staff] to be men and women of great humility. We want them to have the attitude of a servant-leader — to have servant hearts. We want them to be filled with joy.”

And he notes that is a daily effort.

“It’s just like exercise,” Jones said. “If you don’t exercise daily, you don’t get in better shape. You get in worse shape. It’s the same with culture. If you don’t tend to it daily, it gets worse, not better — quickly.”

“A Great Fit for the Role of President”

Soon after the announcement of Jones as president, he was introduced to the student body by Dr. Rick Christman. Christman had been serving as Interim President for nearly a year, following the resignation of CIU’s seventh president Dr. Mark Smith over health concerns.

Christman described Jones as “a personal friend and a mentor.”

“I have learned much from his leadership, and much from his wisdom and knowledge and guidance,” said Christman who continues to serve CIU as Executive Vice President. He is not alone in his praise for the new leadership.

As students filed out of the Q&A Chapel, sophomore Psychology major Caleb Schell, who also serves as an RA, referred to Jones as “very spiritually grounded in his beliefs,” adding that “he showed himself to be a relatable person, who is a great fit for the role of president.” ■

JAMES THOMPSON ('22)

CIU Alumnus Works to Understand the Buddhist Mindset

James Thompson Shares the Gospel with College Students in Thailand

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

It was only the second time that James Thompson had set foot on the Columbia International University campus. But he seemed right at home as he clutched his Master of Arts diploma and chatted with his advisor and dean in the CIU Quad, following December commencement ceremonies.

Thompson, a missionary to Thailand and freelance writer, earned his M.A. in Intercultural Studies (ICS) online. But the native of Georgia made the trip back to the U.S.A. to be recognized as he walked the stage of Shortess Chapel.

“It was wonderful to see everyone together celebrating their accomplishments,” said Thompson. “It gave me a real sense of the community here, and the shared purpose and the shared mission. That’s really inspiring, and really motivating to get back out there and continue ‘making Him known,’” Thompson added quoting from the CIU motto, “To Know Him and to Make Him Known.”

Thompson’s ministry is to college students on a university campus in Thailand through CMF (Christian Missionary Fellowship) International. His master’s thesis focused on the students’ Buddhist religious education to better understand how Thais teach their children about faith and what they think about their faith now as young adults.

“Thais are very open to hearing about other worldviews, which, of course, is an advantage for a ministry like ours,” Thompson said. “The difficulty is bringing them to a point that they can accept that Jesus is the only answer to whatever spiritual questions or desires they may have.”

Through his interviews with the Thai students, Thompson says he is ultimately looking for insights into how he and CMF can contextualize culturally relevant ways to present the gospel, not just to Thai students, but students from other

Southeast Asian countries who attend the university near Bangkok.

“Their main religion is Buddhism, but they’re comfortable incorporating Hindu gods and folk religion — they can blend it all together into a syncretistic mix,” Thompson said. “Sometimes, if you are explaining Christianity to a Thai, they may think that they can just incorporate Jesus into what they already believe. The hard part is making them see that’s not actually what Jesus offers.”

Thompson’s advisor, Dr. Ryan Klejment-Lavin said “James was a phenomenal student,” while ICS Dean Dr. Ed Smither noted students, such as Thompson, benefit from an online degree because the missionary is learning at his or her place of ministry.

“Their context is their classroom, and we’re coming into their classroom,” Smither said.

Now, with more knowledge and insight through his master’s degree studies, Thompson is ready to continue into his third year of Thailand college campus ministry.

“Patience is the main thing,” Thompson said. “You have to have the mentality that you are planting seeds, and you may or may not get to see the fruit that you want to see while the students are at the university.”

And seed-planting is what CIU graduates are encouraged to do. At each commencement, they are reminded of this with the gift of an actual bag of seed from Alumni Ministries and singing the lyrics from the CIU Alma Mater:

*“The vision thou hast given of truth and human need
Inspires us all to service to sow the precious seed.”* ■



If you are a regular subscriber to Christianity Today magazine, you may have read articles written by James Thompson.

With an undergraduate degree in Journalism from the University of Georgia, he is a freelance writer who has reported from Asia and Europe and considers writing a part of his ministry. In his words:

“

It has given me the opportunity to tell the story of what God is doing in other parts of the world. I think it's important for Christians who may not have had the opportunity to go to these places to read about what the church is doing in other corners of the globe.

Otherwise, it's easy to focus on what God is doing where you are ... but we're also called to stay connected ... to our brothers and sisters around the globe.”

Published articles by James Thompson:



September 8, 2023, Religion Unplugged,
“The Search For Christ And Truth In The German City Of Freiburg”



June 15, 2023, Christianity Today,
“God Called Him to Thailand 60 Years Ago. He Still Hasn't Left.”



April 22, 2023, Religion Unplugged,
“Cambodian New Year: Temples, Buddha Statues And ... Water Fights?”



February 22, 2023, Christianity Today,
“Open Doors Gets Dragged into Germany's Debate Over Christian Persecution”



January 25, 2023, Christianity Today,
“Born Again and Again: Cambodian Evangelicals Celebrate 100 Years”



November 29, 2022, Christianity Today,
“German Bible Translator Introduces Readers to ‘God's New Reality’”



TREVOR CASTOR ('08)

Combining Zeal with Knowledge: *The Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies is Here for You*

By Dr. Trevor Castor, Zwemer Center Director



I was 18 years old when the Lord placed a burden on my heart to bring the gospel to Muslims. A year later, I married my high school sweetheart, who had led me to Christ during my senior year. Two years later, we and three teammates set off to plant a church in a 100% Muslim country. Needless to say, we were young, ambitious and a little naïve. We were also unprepared, but our youthful zeal carried us onward.

Despite our intentions to be like the Apostle Paul and “preach Christ where He was not known,” we found ourselves back home, after only two years, with our faith barely intact. Looking back, I can now see that we had bitten off far more than we could chew. We approached our training for Muslim ministry more like a sprint rather than a marathon. While we made incredible friendships with

“

*I was 18 years old
when the Lord placed
a burden on my heart
to bring the gospel to
Muslims.”*

—TREVOR CASTOR ('08)

Muslims, we had little to offer them, regarding a relationship with Jesus. We knew very little about Christianity and almost nothing about Islam. Simply put, we were ill-equipped for the task we were sent out to do. If not for the grace of God, that burden for Muslims knowing Christ would have come and gone as quickly as our missionary service.

After returning from the field, we resigned from our mission organization, and I took a job working as a first mate on a fishing vessel. During that year, I encountered three people who told me to consider going to college at Columbia International University. They said CIU would be a good place to figure out what had gone wrong in our previous ministry to Muslims. We did not know anyone in South Carolina, and neither of us had ever heard of CIU. I also had no desire to go to college, since I barely survived high school and was enjoying my new fishing career. My wife, on the other hand, sensed that we should look into it.

When I reminded her that we had no money to attend college, she replied, “When did we start saying no to things that required us to step out in faith?” She had a point. In our six years of service with a mission agency, we were consistently relying on God’s provision, and now I was reluctant to even pray about going to CIU because it did not make financial sense.

We took a new leap of faith and enrolled at CIU in the spring of 2005. Little did I know that we would still be here 18 years later. It was at CIU that I was introduced to the Zwemer Center for Muslim Studies. Although the center was originally established at the US Center for World Missions in 1978, it was moved to the campus of CIU in 2003 because of the shared vision for global missions. It was also at CIU where I met the director of the Center, Dr. Warren Larson. He and his wife Carol had served for 23 years, working among Muslims in Pakistan. We had finally found people who could mentor us and help us make sense of our difficult ministry experience.

After finishing the Master of Arts in Muslim Studies, I wanted to help Warren bring broader exposure to the training that had transformed my life and renewed my passion for Muslim ministry. While I still had a missionary burden “to preach Christ where He was not known,” I also wanted to train people, like our 19-year-old selves, to avoid making the same mistakes we did. Warren apparently had the same idea. In 2009, Warren brought me on board as the Assistant Director of the Zwemer Center, with the hopes of soon retiring and passing on the torch of director.

CIU recently celebrated 100 years of “Knowing Him and Making Him Known,” the Zwemer Center is rejoicing in 45 years of equipping the church for Muslim ministry! Now, more than ever, our training and resources are needed for the many young people preparing for Muslim ministry.” ■



The Zwemer Center at CIU offers comprehensive courses on Islam, facilitates research, fosters dialogue, offers seminars, conducts training and provides resources for effective witness and ministry among Muslims.



Visit zwemercenter.com for more information on the Zwemer Center and on how you can become a financial partner.



You can also benefit from the Zwemer courses offered in CIU’s master’s degree in Muslim-Christian Relations. Learn more at ciu.edu/graduate.

The Zwemer Center is named for **Samuel Zwemer**, a pioneer missionary to the Muslims in the latter part of the 19th century and early 20th century. He advocated understanding Islam and building relationships of love and respect among Muslims. He once said: *“If the Churches of Christendom are to reach the Moslem World with the gospel, they must know of it, and know it.”*





Desma and Barry Abbott with their children

DESMA ABBOTT ('95)

Getting the Bible to the Baka

Alumna Overcomes Personal Challenges in the African Rainforest

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

“

She knew where she wanted to go. She knew what she wanted to do, and she was committed to getting there, whatever it took. She was focused. She was diligent. She did the work.”

—SEMINARY PROFESSOR
JOHN HARVEY

It's difficult to decide where to begin the amazing story of 1995 Columbia International University alumna Desma Abbott.

After graduating from CIU, Abbott followed God's leading to the mission field. Finding a mission agency willing to send her out as a single woman, she brought the gospel to the Baka, an unreached people group in a remote area of Cameroon. The assignment would be challenging. The Baka are pygmies with an oral culture, illiterate, and at the bottom in social standing. Abbott later married and had two children as she and her husband, Barry, worked on an oral Bible translation. The conditions were difficult in the West African rainforest. But Abbott, who earned a Master of Arts in New Testament from CIU,

persevered and continues to work among the Baka today. And here's what makes this story especially amazing.

Abbott is legally blind.

“I've been legally blind since I was a child,” Abbott said in a phone interview from her home base in Knoxville, Tennessee while on furlough. “I was born with a genetic generative disease—slightly losing my sight since age five. Now I just see light and shadows.”

Rejected for the Mission Field — at First

But diminishing eyesight never deterred her call to the mission field.

“Right before I came to CIU, I was

turned down by one mission agency because of my eyesight loss and the fact that it would continue, and that I was single. And that was very discouraging,” Abbott said. “But my family and church community had really seen that it was something God was growing in me, and they prayed and God opened the door for me to serve with World Team.”

Once she got to Cameroon, reality began to set in.

“When I got on the field, I thought this might have been a little crazy,” Abbott said. “But the Lord was always confirming that He was preparing the way.”

“She was focused”

And some of that preparation began at CIU. As she navigated the classes and campus through increasingly dimmer vision, God was reminding her of where her strength comes from.

“In my first semester at CIU, I started memorizing verses about weakness. It was clear I needed to embrace [my weakness] more,” Abbott said. “By the end of my second year, my prayer was ... I want to one day be like Paul and say I boast in my weakness because I was very aware of how I was still trying to cover up that weakness.”

But that doesn’t mean she refused the care that came from the loving CIU community around her. While she used a type of magnifying TV screen to read some of her textbooks and could get some books on audio, she had friends, such as classmate Heidi Cordero, who read missions class articles to her in the library.

“I met her my first week, and she knew the Lord was drawing her to me to see how she could help me,” Abbott remembers fondly, while Cordero says those times also helped her focus on her assignments — mostly.

“We would read a few paragraphs and then we would get off track and begin talking about some good-looking boy

on campus or our aspirations for the future,” said Cordero, who now lives in Maryland. “In the end, Desma’s motivation to read the textbooks helped me to do better in class and cemented our friendship.”

In some classes Abbott, could not read the overhead screens or chalkboards the professors were using as lecture aids, and she laughs when she recalls that she didn’t let some professors know that until the final test of the semester.

“Why didn’t you tell me? I could have been helping you!” was the response from one professor.

“I had a couple of professors who really went out of their way in Greek and Hebrew to make sure I could see and not just be listening to the Greek and Hebrew and make sure I could visualize it too,” Abbott said.

Among them was Dr. John Harvey.

“Oh, she was sharp,” Harvey recalls. “She knew where she wanted to go. She knew what she wanted to do, and she was committed to getting there, whatever it took. She was focused. She was diligent. She did the work.”

A Popular CIU Class on the Mission Field

Like many CIU alumni through the years, Abbott had a CIU class on The Progress of Redemption, a study of God’s redemptive plan as it progressively unfolds throughout the Bible. It has been an important part of Abbott’s oral Bible ministry to the Baku, as she unfolds plan of salvation by telling Bible stories.

She recalls that at the first baptism among the Baka, the new believer testified with what she calls “a Progress of Redemption sermon.”

“That’s the first time we heard that from a Baka. We said, ‘this is really powerful. They are making it their own.’”

“A plus instead of a hindrance”

A typical day for Abbott may include visiting a village, sitting on a log with one of the local women, and sharing a Bible story. That woman can then share it with another.

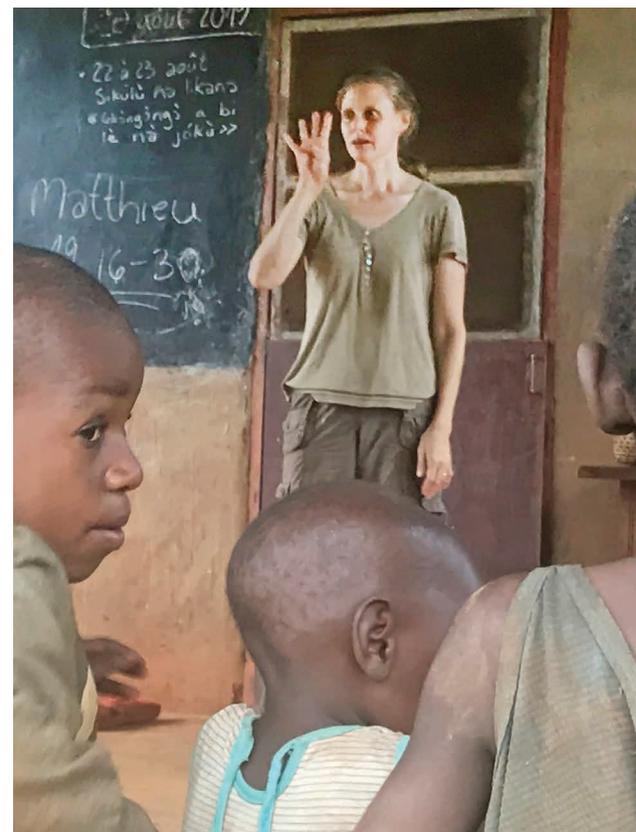
“Without having a Bible or being able to read — everything is oral,” Abbott said. “The fact that I’ve developed as an oral learner out of necessity has been a plus instead of a hindrance.”

And Abbott’s blindness has brought out a tenderness among the Baka, who live in what she calls “a raw and difficult world.”

“They lead me by the hand [and] tell me their name.”

While the gospel continues to spread orally among the Baka, Abbott says, for her team, literacy is a priority, with the ultimate goal being a written Bible translated in the Baka language.

“They want to read God’s Word and keep it alive for the next generation.” ■





OJ ('10)

The “Spirit” of Entrepreneurship in Turkey

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

OJ has a real entrepreneurial spirit. And he follows the Spirit. And both the lower case “s” and capital “S” are evident wherever he goes in his native land of Turkey. Call it “Business for Transformation” (B4T) with a foundation that began to be laid as a Columbia International University student.

OJ (not his real name), earned his General Studies bachelor’s degree from CIU in 2010 and followed that with a Master of Arts degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) the next year. All this while fairly new to the United States. He was adopted at age 15 by a family in South Carolina’s Lowcountry and soon after became a follower of Christ.

“The day I became a believer, I was called to go back to Turkey,” OJ said in a Zoom interview from Turkey. “It was at a Baptist church. I said the ‘sinner’s prayer,’ I opened my eyes and all I knew for sure was that I was going to come back to Turkey.”

With that guidance from above, it was time for a college choice.

“CIU was such a natural match for me,” said OJ. “They ‘send’ people ... with a great reputation among the ‘m’ community,” OJ added, choosing his words carefully. “The professors were amazing and very personable. They really cared to get to know me.”

“A Heart for Business”

One of OJ’s first enterprises has been a very popular coffee dripper. He says it came about as he “poked around” for ideas that he could help make reality and open the door to meet other business people and share the gospel with them.

“It was actually a runner-up in a manual category in a Milan coffee festival,” OJ notes, adding that business partners “are talking to a company in England for distribution there.”

OJ says he “has a heart for business” that goes beyond just being a money-making success.

Coffee Conversations

While OJ co-founded a successful coffee dripper business, he admits he is not exactly a coffee aficionado.

So, he takes his cues from colleagues when it comes to making business presentations. It’s at those presentations that coffee brings conversations about being a Christian. He once wore a cross at a coffee festival.

“

The day I became a believer, I was called to go back to Turkey.”

—OJ (‘10)

“You should have seen the looks I got,” OJ laughed looking back on the experience. He takes it in stride, “It has been fun overall ... my way of communicating with the young adults in Turkey.”

For those young adults who are believers and would like to start a business, OJ is there for them.

“Because quite a few people get disowned by their families when they become Christians,” OJ explains. “If you want to start a business, normally your family helps out. If you don’t have a family, who is going to help you? So, we have been talking about filling that role ... encourage the young adults to stay in the country. Don’t leave it. Don’t flee it... Do something to thrive here.”

Bible Correspondence Courses

Meanwhile, the Spirit and OJ’s entrepreneurial spirit has led him to volunteer with what he calls his “direct ministry,” an ambitious free Bible correspondence course.

It initially opened the opportunity to meet in person each year with about 3,000 Bible recipients in his region who had questions. Then came the COVID pandemic, and few people worldwide were meeting in person. But amazingly, the requests for Bibles grew 10-fold.

“We were seeing people come to the Lord and [we were] doing discipleship,” OJ said.

But it got more than a bit overwhelming. Following up with that many people in a timely manner was difficult. That’s when OJ got another idea. He started a media company.

GIT: “Gospel in Turkey” Media

While on the Zoom interview, OJ picked up his laptop and gave a tour of the solution to the follow-up problem: the small studio of Gospel in Turkey (GIT) Media.

“It suddenly grew from just podcasts, now it’s YouTube, worship music recordings, children’s ministry, as well as recording memory verses,” OJ explained as he showed recording equipment and editing suites. He was almost giddy as he added, “We are actually working on a Christmas video we can use in the Turkish church.”

(After Christmas, OJ reported that with a little advertisement, there were over 75,000 views of the video.)

GIT employs three full-time people and has 17 volunteers. “It’s kind of exciting,” adds OJ.

The CIU Experience was Key

Looking back, OJ says the CIU experience was important for him and his wife, who is also a CIU graduate.

“We talk about CIU every week,” OJ said. “I was in a bunch of professors’ homes.”

Choking back tears, he recalled his Sophomore year when he was doubting his faith and telling a professor, “I don’t belong here. I’m not a Christian. I don’t know if I believe like I should believe.”

That professor advised him to take his doubts to God, and for OJ, that made all the difference.

“The way that those professors stepped into my life — that encouraged me. That is one of my most vivid memories.” ■

Remembering Darren Richie

1965-2023



Looking down from the balcony of Columbia International University's Shortess Chapel, you might have thought you were observing a gathering of CIU athletic teams ready for a motivational talk before the big game.

From above, you could see the baseball team in their pinstripes. Nearby were the blue and gold of the men's basketball team. In walked the women's volleyball team in their blue warm-up suits. The CIU Rams' 13 teams were represented, along with their coaches.

But there were no rally cries. Instead, quiet reflection on the life of their leader.

CIU Athletics Director Darren Richie was represented on the stage by a photo of him and the wide toothy grin he was known for around campus. The teams gathered "In loving memory of Darren Anthony Richie," who contracted bacterial meningitis while

supporting the women's soccer team on a tournament trip in Florida just a couple weeks prior. He passed away on Dec. 1 at age 58.

Among those sharing memories of Richie was CIU Women's Head Soccer Coach Kara Lail who said that Richie demanded more out of the coaches, "so we would demand more out of our athletes, so out of that we could do more to impact the Kingdom together."

Lail went on to say that Richie "loved to love others" and was passionate about using athletics to spread the gospel by scheduling team mission trips to Costa Rica. But not before a spiritual retreat for all athletes prior to a new school year.

"He believed that the retreat was the perfect way to get our athletes' hearts and minds on Jesus prior to starting the school year," Lail said. "In the most recent CIU retreat, 30 athletes gave their lives or recommitted their lives to Christ."

That priority was verified by CIU Interim President Dr. Rick Christman who said that in Richie's three-and-a-half years as CIU's athletics director, the spiritual retreat was a budget priority.

"It was not a luxury in his mind," Christman said. "This was an imperative necessity. Regardless of anything else we planned to do in a given year, this was going to happen, and he would make it happen."

Memories of Darren Richie "The Family Man" were shared by his wife Claire, five daughters and extended family members. Many of the stories were light-hearted and funny. But they also described him as a "problem-solver," "larger than life," and "the center of the extended family."

Looking out over the athletes, coaches and CIU faculty and staff, Mrs. Richie added, "I am so grateful for every single one of you and how much you loved Darren." ■



Rams Volleyball Repeats as AAC Tournament Champions!

CIU women's volleyball avenged an early season loss to Bryan College (Tenn.) as the Rams swept the Lions (25-23, 25-10, 25-22) in the Appalachian Athletic Conference (AAC) Tournament title match Nov. 11. It was the second consecutive AAC Women's Volleyball Tournament Championship for CIU. The Rams also repeat as outright AAC Champions, having won the regular-season title for the third straight season.

Coach Katie Weiss says she is humbled to win the conference championship in her first season as CIU head coach.

"I can't say enough about our girls," Weiss said. "It has been a joy to be around this team all season, and it is awesome to see their hard work rewarded with this accomplishment."

The team then advanced in the opening round of the NAIA National Championship for the first time in program history. Playing in front of the hometown crowd in a packed Moore Fitness Center, the Rams bested No. 24 Bethel (Ind.) 3-1 (25-15, 22-25, 26-24, 25-19), avenging last season's opening-round loss to the same Bethel team.

But the Rams would lose to the Southern Oregon University Raiders in the next round 3-0 (25-21, 33-31, 25-18), concluding CIU's historic season with a 32-3 overall record, the Rams' best season winning percentage in program history. ■

Coach Katie Weiss with her team during a time out at the Moore Fitness Center



Advice to those considering establishment of a scholarship: “Do It!”

First CIU Endowment Began with Ralph and Pat Sims

South Carolina native Ralph Sims is a soft-spoken man with a relaxed Southern drawl. The former business executive with an eye for financial details was also a tax preparer for 27 years following his retirement, calling it “my ministry.” He served clients with difficult tax returns, but also difficulties in their personal life.

“I was able to listen, understand their plight, pray with them [and] share my faith with them,” Ralph said during a recent visit to the Columbia International University campus. He also noted that as a member of the Gideons, he kept New Testaments on his desk and gave them away.

“In all that time, I only had one person who said, ‘no; I have a different path’” Ralph added.

That heart for ministry would impact a decision regarding CIU.

Ralph and his wife Pat live in Camden, just a short drive east on I-20 from CIU. And even though their roots run deep in the Palmetto State soil, they had never heard of CIU until Ralph was on a pastor’s search committee for the couple’s church. He went to hear a candidate for the position who was a graduate of Columbia Bible College, CIU’s name at the time. That CIU alumnus introduced the Sims to other CIU alumni and students, including the Ambassador Choir, who, during a performance in Camden, took shelter in the Sims’ home during an ice storm.

The more Ralph and Pat knew about CIU, the more impressed they were.

“We just felt the Lord saying, ‘There’s a need,’ and you need to do something,” Ralph recalled. So, he asked if CIU had an endowment so they could set up a scholarship. As it



turned out, there was no endowment at the time, so the Sims were pioneers when they contributed \$500 toward an endowment in 1983.

“So, we contributed what we could, and when we got to \$10,000, it was considered a scholarship.” Ralph said. “We’ve been building on it ever since then.”

The Mollie L. Sims and Alberta J. Barfield Memorial Scholarship is named in memory of the couple’s mothers.

Ralph’s message to others who have considered supporting CIU through a scholarship is simply this: “Do it!”

“Recognize that when you are giving to a Christian organization, to help people who are going into the field of bringing people into the fold, if it is within your power, you do it.” ■

Is God speaking to you regarding the establishment of a CIU scholarship?

For information, contact Frank Bedell at (803) 807-5001 or frank.bedell@ciu.edu.

You can make a difference.

PRAY:

Join the 1,000 Prayer Partners!

- ciu.edu/prayer

GIVE:

Impact our Students!

- One time or monthly
- Online: ciu.edu/give
- Call: (803) 807-5006
- Mail: CIU Advancement Office
PO Box 3122
Columbia, SC 29230

LEARN:

Stay informed.

- ciu.edu/podcast
- [Facebook.com/Columbia International University](https://www.facebook.com/ColumbiaInternationalUniversity)
- ciuclassics.org

SHARE:

Refer students for Legacy or Alumni Referral Grant.
(\$4,000 value)

PLANNED GIVING:

- Stocks, bonds, IRAs
- Name CIU as beneficiary
- Wills, bequests & estate plans
- Charitable gift annuity
- Call: (803) 807-5001
- Email: frank.bedell@ciu.edu
- Visit: ciu.edu/plannedgiving





Every endowed scholarship impacts a CIU student.

WHAT is the CIU endowment?

- The CIU endowment consists of donations that have been given to CIU where the gift portion is invested, and a percentage of earnings is awarded in scholarship aid.
- It offers the opportunity to multiply and extend the impact of a scholarship.

WHERE does the CIU endowment go?

- The CIU endowment is managed by a qualified third-party organization that aligns with Christian values.
- CIU adheres to a conservative investment strategy for long-term gain.
- The CIU endowment is under the direction and review of the CIU Board of Trustees Finance Committee.

WHY give to the CIU endowment fund?

- Perpetually help provide aid to future CIU students. 90% of our students need assistance.
- Honor a loved one or memorialize those who have passed away.
- Create a legacy.
- It is a proven concept. Over their lifetime, endowments award more than you initially invest in them.
- It's good stewardship because of the many long-term positive outcomes.

WHO benefits from the CIU endowment?

- Students receive financial assistance giving them the vital aid they need to attend CIU.
- CIU is able to enhance the university's financial stability.
- Donors are able to leverage their giving and have the opportunity to get to know students more personally.

WHEN should I consider giving to the CIU endowment?

- You have received an inheritance.
- You have a stock portfolio or other appreciated assets and want to avoid capital gains tax.
- You have a minimum required distribution.
- You feel the desire to create a legacy or honor a loved one.

HOW is the CIU endowment different from other gifts to CIU?

- 5% of the CIU endowment balance is released to be awarded each year.
- Awards are made from the endowment earnings.
- Any additional gifts or surplus earnings are reserved for future growth and scholarship distribution.

To establish an endowed scholarship, please contact **Frank Bedell** at **(803) 807-5001** or **frank.bedell@ciu.edu**.



MILDRED (GROENDYKE) DREESSEN ('53) served the Lord in Nigeria for many years alongside her late husband, **MARVIN ('52)**, through nursing and teaching the Bible to women and children. They led over 20 vacation Bible schools each summer, along with three weeks of camp. They followed up those ministries with Sunday schools, church plants, Bible studies and youth groups. Today, Mildred is in an assisted living center near her daughter Esther. ✉ e.searcy@comcast.net

CECIL BEACH ('65) was honored on Jan. 24 with the distinguished Order of the Palmetto presented by South Carolina Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette. He was recognized for his many years on the board of the South Carolina Association of Christian Schools. Cecil gives credit to his undergraduate years at CBC where he also met his wife, **PHYLLIS (COLE) ('65)**. ✉ icecilbeach@hotmail.com

JOHN ('66) AND BONNIE NEWMAN are thankful for their ministry and for the translation of the Duruma Bible in Kenya and for the Lunguda translation in Nigeria. ✉ john.floyd.newman@gmail.com

CONSTANCE CHASE ('68) taught at Lakeland Christian School in Lakeland, Florida from 1968 till 1972. She met her pastor husband at Word of Life, New York, then taught in Christian Schools until retiring in 2017. They volunteer at America's Keswick where the Victorious Christian Life is at the core of the ministry. ✉ teachhorne@yahoo.com

KRISTINA (SELLERS) LOMAC ('69) After a number of years ministering to internationals in both Berlin, Germany and Istanbul, Turkey, Kristina and her husband, Billy, now live in Charlotte, North Carolina. Cross-cultural friendships and the sharing of God's Word continues in their present location. ✉ kristinalomac@yahoo.com

1 PAUL ('70) AND VICKI YOUNG and their children have had 22 years of fruitful evangelistic ministry in South Africa, where because of rising crime, the message of repentance is especially needed. ✉ smallpaul@mweb.co.za

JUDI (GIBBS) MOTT ('75) became a foster parent to a seven-year-old boy in 2019, and in 2020 his sister came into Judi's care. In August 2022, she adopted them. ✉ l33rc9aj@duck.com

2 SCOTT ('80) AND SHERRI (MCDONOUGH) ('80) MORNINGSTAR are on staff with NAIM Ministries working with Native American students at Montana State University, as well as doing missions with Musik-Brucken, a music ministry in Austria. They have been married for 44 years and have three children and eight grandchildren. ✉ scottmorningstar247@gmail.com

3 TOM GALEY ('82) married Gabriela in 1990. They have served in Germany as church planters, and Tom has also taught Bible at College of the Ozarks in Missouri. Tom later developed a relationship with a mission in Malawi, Africa, where they train rural pastors. The Galeys have four children and four grandchildren. ✉ gtgaley@gmail.com

4 DANIEL ('82) AND SUSAN WICHER have served as church planters, mission leaders, and Latino mission mobilizers for 40 years under Camino Global, now Avant Ministries. They have lived in the countries of Mexico and Spain. In the United States they have lived in Dallas, Texas, and most recently Memphis, Tennessee, where they coach leaders and advance God's work among Hispanics. ✉ dwicher@avmi.org

5 BRAD ('86/'93) AND VICKI (DILL) ('86) BIGNEY planted an EFCA church (Evangelical Free Church of America) in 1996 in the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati area, where Brad has served as the lead pastor for 28 years. He's also a counselor with ACBC (Association of Certified Biblical Counselors) and author of "Gospel Treason: Betraying the Gospel with Hidden Idols." They have five adult children and two grandchildren. ✉ bradbigney@graceky.org

6 ANDY SMITH ('88) is on home assignment after completing his seventh term of service with OMF International as international coordinator for evangelization, based in Manila. ✉ andy.smith@omfmail.com

7 HEATHER (MURRAY) PIPERATO ('91) graduated from Delaware Valley University with her Doctorate in Educational Leadership in May of 2023. After serving for nearly a decade as a middle and high school principal, she is now a central office administrator in a Pennsylvania public school district. ✉ dpipheat@gmail.com

8 DOUG ('93) AND TRICIA ('93) STONER

served in Slovakia for about 20 years and then in Vienna, Austria for 10 years working as church planting facilitators. They now live in Colorado Springs helping their elderly moms.

✉ dtstoner@gmail.com

9 KEITH ('94) AND LILIA KENYON

have been serving 24 years in Mexico among the Nahua indigenous group of the Huasteca region. In addition to coordinating a pastoral training course for the indigenous church leaders, Keith coordinates Operation Christmas Child for the region, giving particular emphasis to reaching the hundreds of villages without Christ.

✉ kck@proton.me

10 DAN AND KRISTI ('96) DEVRIES

After serving in the pastorate in the United States for over 15 years, Dan and Kristie now serve with One Challenge. Dan is coaching networks of church planting pastors in Asia, as well as serving as the director of sports ministry. Kristie recently returned to work as a nurse in the oncology field after homeschooling her children.

✉ kbbigdogs@juno.com

TOM ABERNATHY ('96) recently retired from public school teaching. He now provides music at his church through concerts and is a substitute teacher in the private school sector.

✉ abernethy.jr@juno.com

BRIAN BEHL ('99) teaches English at a Christian school in Rockford, Illinois.

✉ bbelh@yahoo.com

11 CHRIS PLATT ('03) is in full-time pastoral ministry and pursuing a Ph.D. in historical theology.

✉ cplatt777@gmail.com

KYLE AND SARAH (RYMER) ('05) BRENON

along with their children Christopher, Carolina, Hannah, Dayna, Evalena, and Juliana, welcomed Luke into their family in August 2023.

12 JOSHUA CLARK ('07) has become an international balloon artist. He teaches at conventions around the world and posts daily balloon videos online. He has over 2.5 million followers on social media.

✉ JRCBalloons@gmail.com

13 DANIEL ('06) AND KATINA (KEARSE) ('08) MCGREGOR

Daniel was ordained as a traditional diaconate on Dec. 2, 2023, and ordained in the Diocese of the Carolinas. He serves in a tent-making capacity at Resurrection Anglican Church in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

✉ daniel@resurrectionrockhill.org

LUTHER ('08) AND JESSICA (LEE) ('08) SCHRUM ('08) recently transitioned from Utah to New Jersey. Luther serves as pastor of Christ Community Church in Lindenwold, New Jersey.

✉ lutherschrum@gmail.com

14 DANIEL ('09, '14) AND REBEKAH (DONOVAN) ('10) HODGES

are serving in Germany, training Christian leaders and pastors at the ministry Neues Leben. They, along with their three children, are excited to equip believers and bring the gospel to a country where less than 2% of people believe.

✉ rehodges5@gmail.com

15 MAYONNE (THOMAS) GRANZO ('11) was selected by the U.S. Department of State to be an alumni ambassador for English language programs. She will represent English language programs at conferences and events around the country. Mayonne is only one of 11 English language programs alumni selected for the 2023-2024 Alumni Ambassador cohort.

✉ mayonnethomas@gmail.com

NATHAN MORRIS ('12) is the pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Montrose, Georgia. This is a bi-vocational role. He is still the reference and instruction librarian at the Macon Campus of Central Georgia Technical College.

✉ nsmorris@mac.com

ROB BROWN ('12, '19) Beginning on June 1, 2024, Rob will be the new Head of School at First Presbyterian Academy in Greenville, South Carolina.

✉ jrobbrown17@gmail.com



16 MARTIN CHOI ('13) AND JEAN CHANG ('12) live in Dakar, Senegal in West Africa. Martin is the assistant principal at Dakar Academy West, a Christian international school. Jean is learning French, involved in women's ministry and university students' ministry. ✉ melodyofharmony527@gmail.com

GARRETT ('13) AND DANIELLE BREWER MOSLEY have been married for eight years. Garrett teaches assistive technology to the blind so they can operate software on computers or smartphones. ✉ garrettmosley@outlook.com

17 KYLE ('15) AND BRITTANY STIKELATHER, along with Lana, welcomed Robert Graham "Gray" into their family in November 2023. ✉ stik1402@gmail.com

DAVID ('19) AND SARA (KNIGHT) ('21) FREDERICK along with proud grandparents, **KEN ('98)** and Suzanne Frederick, welcomed Levi Robert into the family in December 2023. ✉ kdfrederick96@gmail.com



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18 IVAN OREAMUNO ('20) After two and a half years of serving at ESEPA Seminary in Costa Rica as a professor and in administrative roles, Ivan is now the academic dean. He will continue to teach every semester while taking on new responsibilities. ✉ ivanorcan@gmail.com

19 EMERSON ('20) AND JENNIFER (WAN) ('21) SHAW are getting ready to serve in overseas missions with the International Mission Board (IMB). They have three girls; Sophia (4), Charissa (4) and Cleodora (2). ✉ godisalwaysoopen@gmail.com

20 SAM ('21) AND ROSE (STAFF) EBERLE, along with Hazel, welcomed George Greeley into their family in September 2023. ✉ Rose.eberle@ciu.edu

21 MICHAEL ('21/'22) AND ELIZABETH (BUCHANAN) ('21/'22) KENNEDY welcomed Theodore into their family in July 2023. ✉ twitchyb99@gmail.com

ART DELGADO ('22) was ordained as a reverend through the NAB (North American Baptist) association of churches in October 2023. He now serves as the Associate Pastor of Senior Care and Visitation for Quail Lakes Baptist Church in Stockton, California. ✉ art@qlbc.org

CHARLES CHEN ('24) AND ACACIA LIU ('24) welcomed baby Leo in October 2023. Both Charles and Acacia are studying and working at CIU. ✉ Charles.chen@ciu.edu

22 Alumni gathering in Costa Rica
 Back Row: **IVAN OREAMUNO ('21), ANDREW HALBERT ('10), LUIS ALONSO ('98), ADRIANNA ROGERS ('21/'23),** Silvia Rogers, **ANDRE ROGERS ('95), MARK PADGETT ('83),** visitor, Ken Resztak
 Front Row: **CAMILA ARTAVIA ('22), MARIA ALONSO ('98), PRISCILLA LARA ('04), JULIE (SMITH) HALBERT ('08), ARLEEN RESZTAK ('77)**



22

IN MEMORIAM

- PAUL WONDERS ('48)** – January 2024
- FERN WILSON ('50)** – April 2023
- BARBARA ORMEROID BLACKBURN ('50)** – March 2023
- ROBERT ALDRICH ('53)** – September 2023
- MARDELLE SNIPESS NASSHAN ('53)** – December 2023
- ANNE TROTTER OGLE ('53)** – May 2023
- P. JANIE BLACKFORD SPENCER ('53)** – January 2024
- JEANETTE TAYLOR JONES ('55)** – November 2023
- DONALD SKJOLD ('55)** – December 2023
- EUGENE LEMAIRE ('56)** – May 2023
- JAMES BLIZZARD ('56)** – March 2023
- JAMES AYCOCK ('56)** – August 2023
- PHYLLIS SHEDD MARTIN ('56)** – February 2024
- RHODA FEIGHT JACKSON ('57)** – December 2023
- MARLIN HARDMAN ('58)** – January 2023
- INGEGERD LARSON ('58)** – July 2023
- BARBARA ROBERTS NEAL ('58)** – August 2023
- MILDRED DEREMER FROM ('59)** – October 2023
- IRVING HUFFINGHAM ('59)** – December 2023
- ROSS LYON ('59)** – December 2023
- BARBARA BLAIR BLANCHARD ('59)** – December 2023
- BARBARA HARRIS FRIEDMAN ('60)** – July 2023
- GLORIA KLARE LAPORTE ('60)** – January 2023
- SUE PORTER VOGT ('60)** – December 2023
- MARILYN MILLER GARCIA ('61)** – January 2024
- LADONNA GRIGGS JONES ('63)** – December 2023
- ROBERT THOMAS ('63)** – November 2023
- HEATHER SUTHERLAND DANIELSON ('63)** – Feb. 2023
- MARY ANN STAUFFACHER HARRIS ('64)** – May 2023
- GEORGE HARVEY ('64)** – August 2023
- MARY ANN SHUTT MCCLOY ('64)** – January 2024
- WAYNE REESE ('64)** – May 2023
- JOSEPH SIEBOLD ('64)** – August 2023
- RICHARD "DICK" BAARENDSE ('64)** – February 2023
- ROBERT YANDLE ('67)** – March 2023
- DIANE ABBOTT DADIAN ('67)** – July 2023
- DAVID MOUW ('68)** – September 2023
- JANE WILLIAMS ETHEREDGE ('69)** – January 2024
- DOROTHY BRANNON ('71)** – October 2023
- JOHN HANSON ('71)** – February 2024
- WILLIAM SMITH ('72)** – May 2023
- BERNERD "ED" RICE ('74)** – September 2023
- BRUCE CLAIBORNE ('81)** – September 2023
- JOSEPH "BUTCH" SURSAVAGE ('84)** – December 2023
- DEBORAH WEATHERFORD WARD ('86)** – July 2023
- HARRY GILLIAM ('91)** – December 2023
- JAMES WEVER ('93)** – November 2023
- TRAVIS LUCAS ('20)** – December 2023
- MARVIN SCHUSTER (Former Board Member)** – October 2023
- CAROL LARSON (Former Staff)** – November 2023
- PATRICIA "TRICIA" WOLFE (Current Student)** – Feb. 2024



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