

# CIU

# TODAY

FALL 2024



## *To Know Him:*

**ENCOUNTERING SPIRITUAL  
FORMATION AT CIU**

# CIU **TODAY**

CIU TODAY is published as a service to CIU alumni and friends by the Office of University Communications at Columbia International University.

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**On the cover:** The CIU Prayer Towers



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# Keeping on the Right Track

Until I was eight years old, our family lived in a two-bedroom house in Atlanta. My grandmother slept in the back-left bedroom. My mother and younger sister slept in the back-right bedroom at night, while my father slept in the same bedroom during the day. My 17-year-old cousin and his 16-year-old wife slept in the living room on a foldout couch. My 15-year-old cousin and I slept in the den.

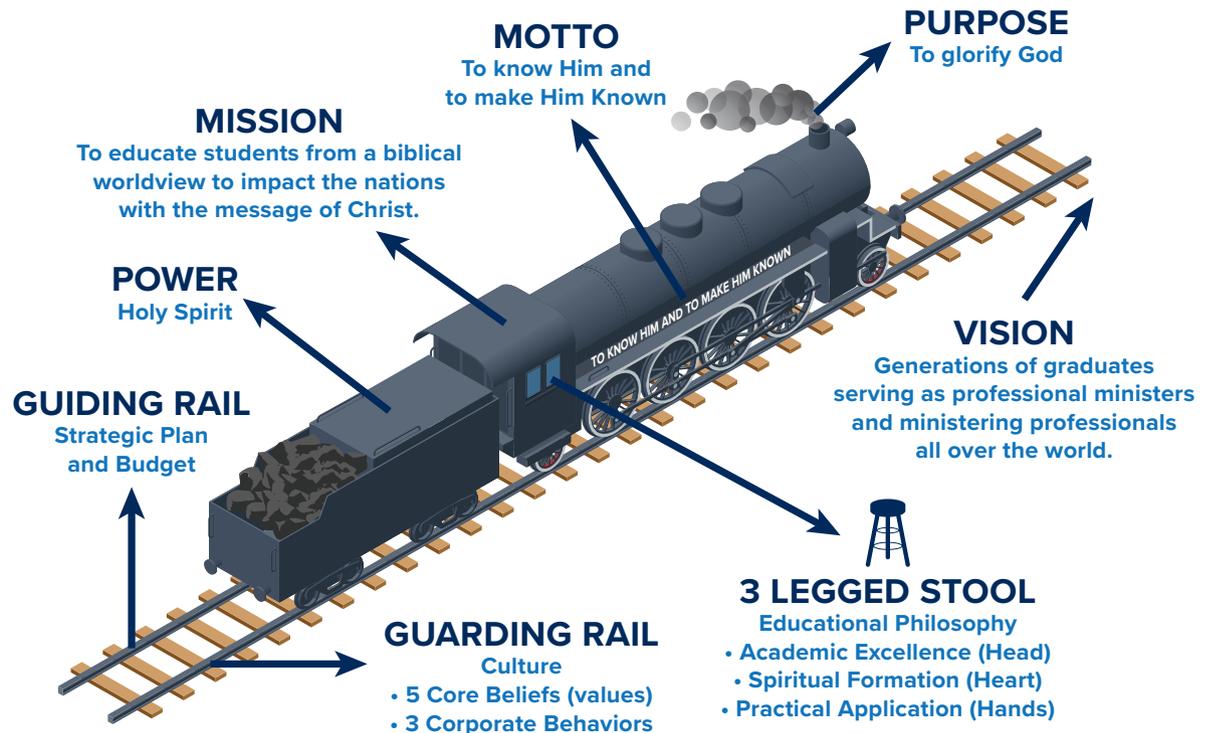
You may be wondering why my dad slept in one of the back bedrooms during the day. It wasn't that we didn't have enough beds. It was because he worked during the nights at the railroad. For approximately four and a half decades he worked at the same railroad yard. As a result, over the years I learned a thing or two about trains. This insight into my background might help you better appreciate the depth of my resolve to keep CIU on the right track.

But what does that mean? Below you will find an illustration of a train that highlights seven non-negotiables as CIU powerfully moves into its second century of existence. Each non-negotiable is vitally important to keep CIU on the right track.

In upcoming issues, we will look at each of these historic non-negotiables in greater detail. For now, know that though we are intently focused on the future, we have not forgotten our past. We are totally dedicated to keeping the CIU and Ben Lippen School trains on the right track.

For His glory,

Bill Jones  
President





# CIU

Columbia  
International  
University

## OUR BIGGEST SCHOLARSHIP OFFERING EVER...

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Professors in procession at Convocation 2024

# Convocation:

## Are you a biblical Christian?

*By Shoshanna Crompton, CIU Student Writer*

Columbia International University continued the time-honored academic tradition of Convocation as the school dedicated the 2024-2025 academic year to God.

As the faculty assembled on the stage of Shortess Chapel dressed in their academic regalia, CIU President Dr. Bill Jones delivered a message calling on the students to examine themselves and consider what type of Christian they are and if they are satisfied with it.

Jones said that if a person identifies as a Christian they will fall into one of the three categories: a Cultural, Biblical, or Typical Christian. He explained that “a Cultural Christian may know about God but they do not know God, ... a Biblical Christian has a relationship with Christ [and] they are within the confines of God’s love, [and] a Typical Christian, ... because of disobedience ... has fellowship but doesn’t stay in fellowship with God.”

Jones concluded with a prayer

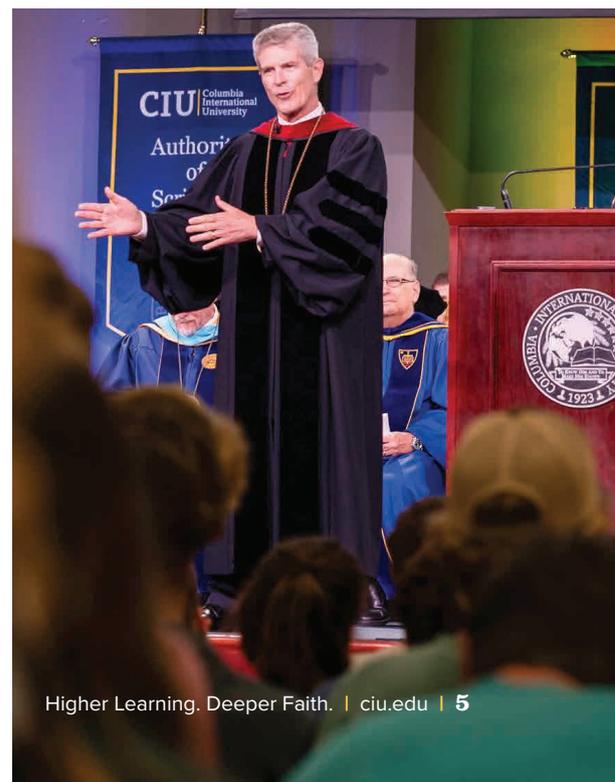
for each category of Christian, and challenging the student body, that if they are not satisfied with their label, to make a decision to be a Biblical Christian.

Abigail Smith, a senior and Business major, said that she thought Jones was “wise in starting off the semester by evangelizing in a manner that was very gentle yet firm,” and because of this she “recognized how intentional he is as a leader and how much he cares about the spiritual formation of this campus.”

Convocation ended with the singing of CIU’s Alma Mater and then, as per tradition, Professor Emeritus Dr. Bryan Beyer, sounded the shofar that he said signifies three things:

1. A warning, because “the enemy is not pleased by what he has seen today”
2. Going into battle, “for some it may be academic ... but it is also a spiritual battle,” and
3. Victory.

Beyer dismissed the students with an encouragement, saying, “2,000 years ago Jesus rose from the dead [and now] that same spirit [that rose] from the dead lives in you which will empower you to know Him deeply and intimately. So, by God’s grace, let’s get after it.” ■



## Nursing News

### A CHANGE IN NURSING PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

Just four years ago, CIU had no nursing program. Not even a stethoscope. Under the leadership of its dean, Dr. Jill McElheny, the School of Nursing quickly grew into one of CIU's most popular programs. But in July, McElheny made the difficult decision to step down believing that God was calling her to be more present with her family, church and community in the South Carolina Lowcountry community of Summerville. Provost Dr. James Lanpher said that McElheny "has done amazing work and has been crucial to the successful launch of the nursing program."

Associate Professor **Angela Conder**, a founding nursing faculty member, is serving as the interim dean. Lanpher said because Conder has been with the program from the beginning, "she knows it well and will lead it well." ■



CIU nursing students and other mission team members observe an "operating theater" in Zambia, known as an operating room in the United States.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Jimmy Leach

## Reaching Zambia

### "The importance of compassion in medical care"

For a second summer, CIU Nursing sent students on a mission trip to (and around) Livingstone, Zambia. The students, Elizabeth Fennett, Rachel Gayner and Bethany Rymer, participated in numerous medical outreach activities in community health clinics, orphanages, nursing homes, and two rural mission hospitals.

They were accompanied by faculty member Dr. Jimmy Leach and adjunct faculty member, Debi Lammert, as they partnered with missionary hosts of "Come Go With Us" ministry.

For Fennett, a junior, the trip was an opportunity to explore her interest in the area of Labor and Delivery and to show the love of Christ.

"I experienced the importance of compassion in medical care with the elderly, the orphaned, new mothers, and new babies," Fennett said. "At one point we got to see a new mother who was 13 years of age with her new baby girl. The baby had been transferred to the NICU. Getting to spend time with the mother and show compassion and love to her and her baby was a way where we had to be professional." ■



Taylor Hollis in the CIU chemistry lab.

## Biology News

### BIOLOGY MAJORS AWARDED SCIENCE GRANT

Two Columbia International University biology majors have received a grant to explore methods to make certain compounds more efficiently, inexpensively, safely and with minimal waste.

The \$4,200 grant comes from the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU), of which CIU is a member.

To receive the grant, sophomore Taylor Hollis and junior Joshua Neath researched the project and wrote a brief proposal outlining their goals, what experiments and techniques they would be doing, what they hoped to learn,

and how it would help them in their academic and professional careers.

CIU Assistant Chemistry Professor Dr. Alex Manzwitsch says the project could be used later, for example, to develop more efficient methods in the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, leading to reduced cost while making the production more environmentally-friendly.

Hollis and Neath will present their findings in January 2025 at the SCICU Research Symposium at Milliken & Company in Spartanburg, South Carolina. ■



## Hoop for Hope: NOT YOUR TYPICAL BASKETBALL DAY CAMP

Just outside CIU's Moore Fitness Center, 16 energetic boys squirmed in their picnic table seats ready to go inside for some basketball. But first, they were challenged to love each other.

"Some of y'all are bullies. Or some of y'all been bullied. We're going to cancel that."

Those were the words of Sinclair Salters, the founder of the Columbia-based ministry 4runners4christ, a partner with the CIU Rams basketball teams as the annual Hoop for Hope four-day summer basketball camp got underway.

Salters was one of a number of volunteers who delivered devotionals on biblical love on the first day of camp that drew 85 boys and girls ages 9-14, many from lower income neighborhoods, which is where Salters focuses his ministry. He signs up a number of kids from these neighborhoods, and with CIU, coordinates a bus ride to campus for the campers.

The man who organizes the camp

each year is Rams Head Basketball Coach Tony Stockman who is upfront about why this is not your typical basketball day camp — it's about glorifying Jesus Christ. Each day had a new biblical theme. While Monday's theme was love, Friday's theme was obedience.

"We have gallon zip lock bags and we're going to put soap, deodorant and a toothbrush in them ... and (the campers) are going to give it to the homeless or whoever might need it,"

Stockman explained. "That's showing obedience. If I

have a relationship with God, what does that look like? I should be helping other people."

Grace and repentance were other themes for the week. ■



## RAMServe

### CIU students, faculty renew the Midlands

Hundreds of Columbia International University students spanned out across greater Columbia for the fourth annual RAMServe day on April 2. The Ram is the CIU mascot, but in this case, RAM stands for "Renewal Around the Midlands," as the students took part in nearly 30 community service projects with several CIU professors lending a hand, as well.

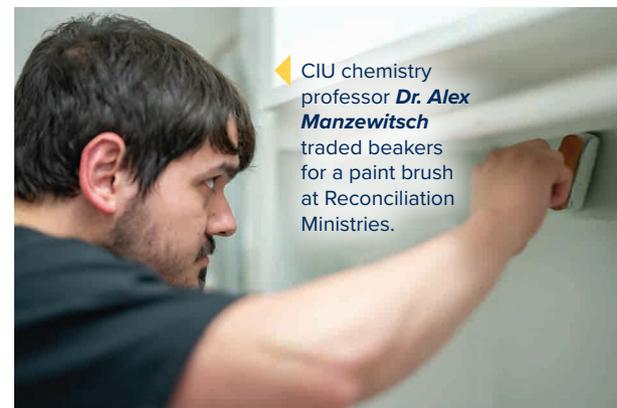
At Reconciliation Ministries, the harmonizing voices of three CIU female students could be heard through the open windows on Beatty Downs Road — singing hymns as they painted.

Among them was freshman Paris Acquah, a nursing major who told local media on the scene that serving takes many different forms.

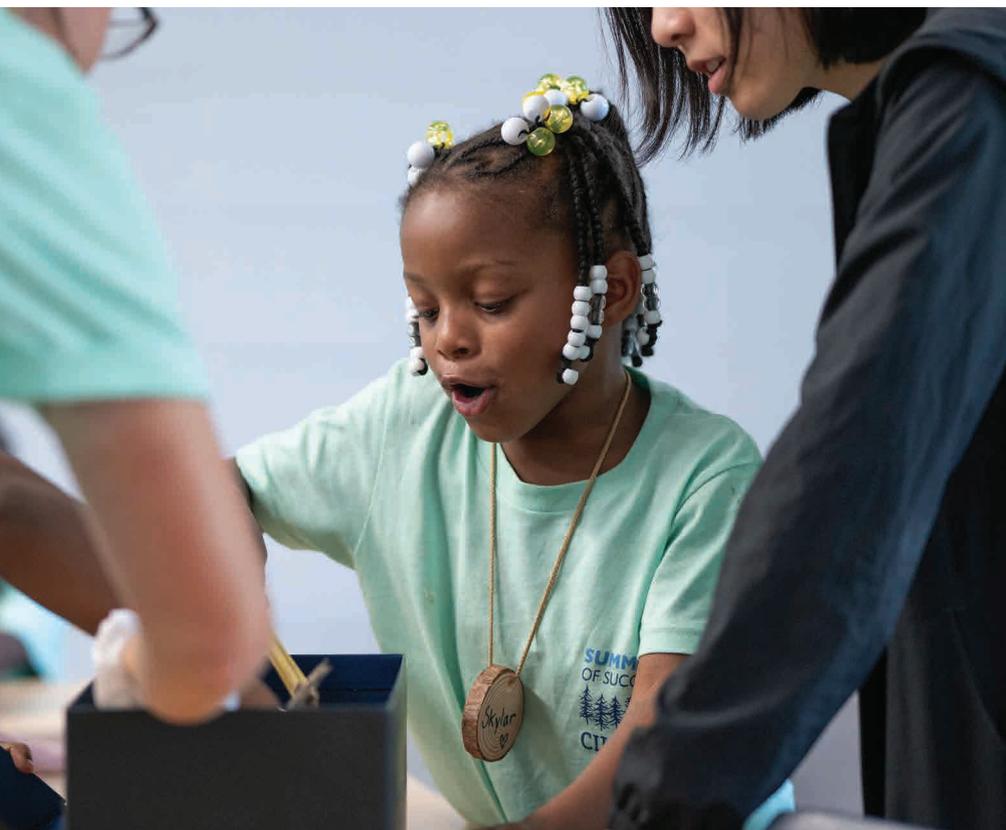
"I love serving others, even nursing itself has a lot to do with serving ... this shows me that serving can take so many different aspects of society — even painting. I love this experience," Acquah said.

Reconciliation Ministries assists men with addictions through a residential recovery and discipleship program. Executive Director Ashley Arrington says the ministry has been a partner with CIU since the inception of RAMServe.

"Volunteer days from RAMServe help us to serve our community at a greater capacity," Arrington said. ■



CIU chemistry professor **Dr. Alex Manzewitsch** traded beakers for a paint brush at Reconciliation Ministries.



## Summer of Success: Inquiring young minds learn about God’s creation — and college

Nearly three dozen K-6 grade school students from the Carolina School for Inquiry learned about nature and about college during the “Summer of Success” week hosted by the CIU Academic Success Center and the College of Education.

In its second year, the Summer of Success included a morning session for 25 incoming CIU freshmen and transfer students who were prepped on how to get ready for college. They joined in as assistants for the afternoon session with the School for Inquiry, guiding the children as young as four through nature-oriented games and nature walks with the biblical theme: *God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.* (Genesis 1:31a)

“Our purpose is to help them have a really cool experience on our college campus,” said Lisa Lanpher, director of the Academic Success Center. “We want them to come to college, remember that it was a place where they were loved (and) they had fun.”

Carolina School for Inquiry Assistant Principal Dr. Kimberly Harrison said what the students from her charter school were experiencing fits with her school’s mission.

“They’re exploring, they’re doing discovery ... collaborating and building relationships with others,” Harrison said. “It promotes respect for self and others, and also the world because in turn, we are making the world a better place!” ■

## Psychology News

### PSYCHOLOGY MAJORS PRESENT RESEARCH ON “PHUBBING” AT MAJOR CONFERENCE

Two Columbia International University Psychology majors along with their professor, presented important research at the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS) Conference in Atlanta.

The presentation by seniors Tiara Battermann and Naomi Portugal and Psychology Professor Dr. Paula Whitaker, discussed “College Campus Belonging and the Phubbing Phenomenon.” Phubbing is phone snubbing — using your phone to avoid social interaction.

The trio was joined at the conference by Psychology majors Miles Raven, Trinity Spencer, and Ethan Speece, where they all experienced the networking and excitement that is a professional conference along with all of the educational seminars. ■

### Professor honored for decades of service with State Guard

Congratulations to Columbia International University Professor Dr. Michael Langston who has retired from the South Carolina State Guard after 46 years of faithful service to his state and nation. He retires as Deputy Commander, Brigadier General.



The South Carolina State Guard swiftly responds to disasters, safeguarding people, property, and aiding community recovery alongside the National Guard and law enforcement when called upon.

Langston is also a former commanding officer of the Naval Chaplaincy School and Center, and a former director of the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Center. His service as an active duty Navy chaplain included Operation Desert Storm in Iraq and later as a theater chaplain in Afghanistan.

At CIU, Langston is professor of Practical Theology in CIU’s Seminary & School of Counseling, disciplining students to be chaplains around the world. ■



◀ *Bob Holmes and Robertson McQuilkin on McQuilkin's 83rd birthday.*

## *Me, the Media and* **Robertson McQuilkin**

*By Bob Holmes*  
*Senior Writer*

“  
*May we  
all be ready to  
stand boldly for  
the Authority of  
Scripture, one of  
CIU's core values.”*

—Bob Holmes

Ever find yourself in one of those situations where you wanted to hide, but there was nowhere to go?

One part of my job over the last 20 years at CIU has been media relations. I've had the pleasure, and some days, the challenge of working with print and broadcast journalists in the Columbia area.

But there is one day that stands out in my mind and I laugh when I think about it. But it wasn't funny at the time.

I have always done my best to make friends with media members. I've been in their position and understand some of what they're going through. Before working in CIU's University Communications Department, I was a news reporter/anchor for WMHK Radio

for over 12 years when it was owned by CIU.

Consequently, I had known the religion reporter for The State newspaper in Columbia for some time when she asked if she could interview CIU President Emeritus Robertson McQuilkin. This was in the early 2000s when evangelist Billy Graham was in ill health and reporters were gathering interviews with people such as Robertson, who knew him.

I scheduled a time for her to meet Robertson and me at his home. As I made introductions the reporter asked Robertson how he was doing.

“Well,” he began slowly, drawing out that first word. “I was doing fine until I read your newspaper this morning.”

Oh boy. Nowhere to hide. What will the reporter think of this? I immediately knew what Robertson was referring to. On The State Opinion page that December morning was an Op-Ed written by a local theologically liberal clergyman who was questioning every biblical aspect of Christmas beginning with the virgin birth.

I frankly can't remember where the conversation went after that. But that was Robertson. And if it needed to be said, he boldly said it.

The topic did turn to Billy Graham and the reporter heard Robertson reflect on his relationship with the famous preacher.

The reporter and I had a cordial departure that morning as I suggested she come back some day to do an article about Robertson himself. Unfortunately, it never happened. Billy Graham would actually outlive Robertson.

I'll always look back on that day and laugh at Robertson's laid-back, but bold rebuke. May we all be ready to stand boldly for the Authority of Scripture, one of CIU's core values. ■



Photos from Welcome Weekend 2024 including a Luau party hosted by the Alumni Association Leadership Council.



# CIU Celebrating Record-Breaking Enrollment and Largest Incoming Class

*Students taking advantage of the most generous undergraduate scholarship offering in CIU history*

**C**olumbia International University experienced a record-breaking enrollment this fall, with over 2,900 students pursuing traditional undergraduate, graduate, and online degrees.

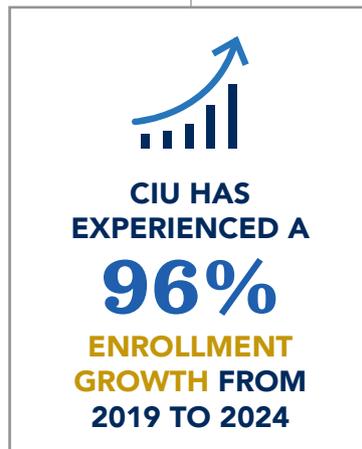
That includes this year's incoming freshman and transfer class of 238 full-time students, the largest in CIU's 101-year history. Notably, 63% are from South Carolina with 15 different countries represented. The class is nearly evenly split, with 52% female and 48% male students. The top five majors chosen by these students include: Nursing, Business Administration, Sport Management, Teacher Education and Health Sciences.

New students are taking advantage of generous new scholarship offerings. As a matter of fact, 100% of CIU students now receive financial aid. This makes an education from a biblical worldview affordable for all.

## NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

Some of the incoming students are benefiting from several new scholarship offerings including:

- 34 receiving the Parent in Ministry Scholarship, provided to students



- The Top 5 MAJORS CHOSEN BY THE CLASS OF 2028 INCLUDE:**
- NURSING
  - BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
  - SPORT MANAGEMENT
  - TEACHER EDUCATION
  - HEALTH SCIENCES

whose parent is a full-time pastor or missionary.

- 20 receiving the Alumni Legacy Grant, given to those with one or both parents who are CIU alumni.
- 14 are entering the Honors Program.
- 43 are First-Generation Scholarship recipients.

Dr. Jen Booth, Vice President for Enrollment and Academic Services, expressed her excitement about the remarkable new class.

“The Class of 2028 is in the best place to prepare for a life of purpose in careers and callings that will transform the world for Christ,” Booth said. “As we celebrate 101 years of CIU, this class reflects our ongoing mission to equip students not only for success in their fields but for meaningful, Christ-centered impact.”

A special thank you to the generous alumni and donor friends who made the new scholarships possible. ■

For more information on the new scholarship offerings and financial aid opportunities, visit [ciu.edu/scholarships](http://ciu.edu/scholarships) or contact the CIU Admissions Office at (803) 807-5024 or [admissions@ciu.edu](mailto:admissions@ciu.edu).

# NEW

# HAPPENINGS

# AT CIU



## Campus Improvements: Enhancing the Student Experience

CIU is enhancing the student experience with a number of campus improvements that began over the summer. The changes come in response to a recent student survey.

For example, everyone enjoys a great dining experience. That's why Hallmark, CIU's dining services manager, is including after-hours meal options at 34 North, CIU's coffee shop.

To provide more parking options, 30-minute parking will be added next to the residence halls, as well as more conveniently-located long-term parking for commuter students designed for shorter walks to class.

Renovation of the Rossi Student Center has been completed and brings more spaces for hanging out, as well as study areas. Landscaping and outdoor seating areas have also been added to create additional common spaces for students.

New furniture is coming to the undergraduate rooms in Pine View Apartments and enhancements to the Pine View Community Center.

Ridderhof is being updated with new flooring, a fresh coat of paint, and student-friendly seating and study spaces. Nearby, the Choir Room is also brightened up with fresh paint and other upgrades.

And physical fitness has not been forgotten. New paint, flooring, furniture and equipment is being installed in the Moore Fitness Center. Outside, the basketball and tennis courts are being resurfaced with lighting added. Bleachers have been placed at the sand volleyball court — and — don't miss this — pickle ball courts are coming to CIU!

## CIU Welcomes a New Dean of Students

The 2024-2025 school year began with a new dean of students.

**Philip Ritchey** has been serving in Christian education for 23 years, including six years as dean of students at Blue Mountain Christian University in northern Mississippi, and as a high school principal and a head of school at private Christian high schools.



Known around campus as "Dean Phillip," he holds a Master of Education degree from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina and a bachelor's degree in both English and Spanish from the University of the Cumberland in Kentucky.

Ritchey says he is excited about coming to CIU and looks forward to leading and working with the Student Life team "to give students an amazing campus life experience," and also looks forward to training and developing student leaders on campus.

"As my wife Stephanie and I begin our journey at CIU, we cannot wait to build relationships with students, while serving them and making an impact for Christ," Ritchey said pointing to Scripture:

*Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)*

"I want to encourage students to find their place on campus, get involved in campus life, build friendships, and pray for one another," said Ritchey as he thanked CIU Executive Vice President Dr. Rick Christman and President Dr. Bill Jones for the opportunity to serve and lead students.

Ritchey replaces Dr. Andre Rogers who is transitioning back into his former role as a full-time professor in the CIU Seminary & School of Counseling. Rogers will continue to serve as director of campus unity. ■

## New Initiative to Give Students a Head-Start on Their Career

The Columbia International University School of Business is launching a new initiative to provide students and alumni with career development.

The goal is to increase and expand access to high-quality training workshops and programs to help students, alumni, and even the community start their own companies, pursue their dream job, or connect with mentors/coaches to grow personally and professionally.

The initiative is being led by **Cynthia Villar**, a native of Peru, who has experience with for-profit and nonprofit organizations and academic experience. She currently serves as a mentor and consultant for entrepreneurship organizations in Peru, Chile, Argentina and the United States.



"I am working at CIU because it is the best place for me to combine my faith with my business-related passion while impacting our students, alumni and community," Villar said. "I want to ensure the next generation is building the necessary skills to start their career through business incubators, skills-based learning, training pathways and internships while also affirming a commitment to strengthening the connection between faith and work." ■



# “HE WILL TEACH YOU MORE *than you will ever teach him.*”

*By Dr. David Olshine*

*CIU's Director and Professor of Youth Ministry, Family & Culture*

**D**o you remember the start of the new century, 2000? I certainly do.

On the morning of New Year's Eve 1999, my wife came busting into the gym where I was on the treadmill, trying to get a head start on trimming down for the new year. Rhonda whispered into

my ear, “I’m pregnant.” For most people, that is welcome news. For us, it was almost a blur and stunning turn of events. Our only child, Rachel was a teenager, and we had come to believe that we would have an only child. We had been praying on and off (more on) for 15 years for another child.



Rachel was an awesome kid! She was full of energy, extroverted, athletic and pretty driven to do well in school.

One night, Rhonda had this inner impression asking her, “do you want another child?” She said yes. (Note: We have had many laughs since that day about why I was not involved in this conversation with her and God!)

Aug. 9 arrived, and we had a newborn son. We named him Andrew David Olshine. Andrew means “strong one” and David means “beloved.” Everything looked great until the presiding doctor came in 10 hours later and said Andrew might have **Down syndrome**, and we were stunned.

Once the hospital did a blood test, it was confirmed two weeks later Andrew indeed had Down syndrome (DS), which is a cognitive intellectual disability. After crying for about 40 days, we sensed the Lord saying “love him, that’s all you have to do and he will teach you more than you’ll ever teach him,” and that’s been so true.

Fast forward from that turbulent year, Andrew is now 23 years old, and it has been a great journey but not without its issues and problems. Andrew is highly functioning, and a graduate of Springhill High School in Chapin. He reads at a 10th grade level, swam for five years on the Irmo High School swim team and has been involved in Special Olympics paddle boarding, swimming and tennis.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 2022, Andrew got GBS (Guillain-Barré Syndrome) which is an attack on the nerves. It has nothing to do with Down syndrome. Although very rare, anyone can get it. We spent 32 days in the hospital and he

recovered in a miraculous way. In fact, his physical therapist said she had never seen anyone get over GBS so quickly in her 30 years as a physical therapist!

What is Andrew like? He’s very outgoing, attends CIU with me on Thursdays, and his biggest deficit is connecting the dots. He does not easily understand outcomes, and how things lead from A to B to C. Our pediatrician taught us years ago to “*focus on his abilities, not his disabilities.*”

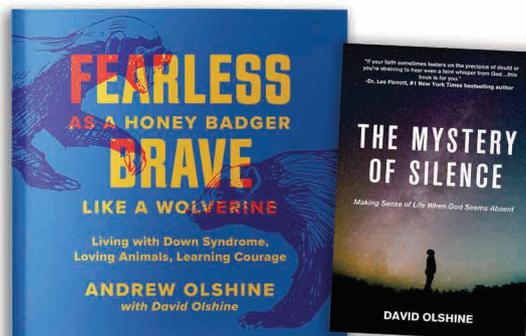
The special needs community uses the word “delay,” when it comes to DS. Think of driving on the interstate, and there are traffic jams, road construction or an accident. Your time of arrival to your destination has been altered, and you get there later than expected. That sums up DS quite well. It has taken extra time for Andrew to learn certain skill sets, and in the process all of us have learned patience! He loves animals, swimming, Disney movies, researching the Bible, pizza, Chick-fil-A and his family. One day after recovering from GBS, Andrew asked me what I thought about him writing a book and I said, *I love it* and so he came up with the idea and here’s the book title:

## **FEARLESS AS A HONEY BADGER, BRAVE LIKE A WOLVERINE: Living With Down syndrome, Loving Animals, Learning Courage.**

We pitched the idea to my publisher and he said, “Yes, let’s do it. We have never had an author with special needs.” Andrew and I began writing this book nearly a year ago. As of April 1, the book is now published and doing well! It was quite a process and enjoyable. Probably 90% of the book was written by him. He loves typing. He loves researching and we’re so proud of him. He came up with hundreds of Bible verses, movie quotes and stories of his life. We have learned one big principle with raising a child with special needs:

*Every day is a gift, one of joys, surprises, some ups and downs. Embrace the journey.*

**You can purchase copies of the book at:**  
[www.fearlessandbravebook.com](http://www.fearlessandbravebook.com). ■



<sup>1</sup> I wrote about the stress, joy and upheaval of Andrew’s birth, his early years and how I learned a few things about waiting on God and how to embrace silence and solitude in my book, **The Mystery of Silence: Making Sense of Life When God Seems Absent** (Core Media Group, 2023). Available on Amazon.

# URBAN LEGENDS OF THE

## Christmas Story

**WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY SAY ABOUT THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE BIRTH OF CHRIST?**



*By Dr. David Croteau*

Dean of the CIU Seminary & School of Counseling  
Author of “Urban Legends of the New Testament”

### INTRODUCTION

**A**n urban legend is a commonly circulated myth, repeated throughout the culture as common knowledge, but which isn't true. Let's explore how urban legends can infiltrate interpretations of biblical passages relating to the Christmas story. The goal is to encourage critical thinking and a focus on the accurate understanding of the biblical text rather than rely on repeated but potentially flawed interpretations.

# “THE GOAL IS TO ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING AND A FOCUS ON THE ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT *RATHER THAN* RELY ON REPEATED BUT POTENTIALLY FLAWED INTERPRETATIONS.”

## NO ROOM IN THE INN?

There is a commonly held belief that Joseph and Mary were turned away from inns in Bethlehem, leading to Jesus being born in a stable. This understanding of the birth of Christ relies on non-biblical sources such as the apocryphal “Protoevangelium of James,” but finds virtually no evidence in Scripture.

One important principle of accurate interpretation is understanding the culture of the people in the Bible. Hospitality was an extremely important communal and cultural value in Judaism. Jews around the first century valued hospitality at the cost of their own comfort. The notion that Joseph and Mary would have been turned away from inns is highly doubtful.

Most portrayals of Jesus’ birth present the story as one of urgency, that as they were entering Bethlehem, Mary went into labor. Joseph attempted to quickly find lodging, but failing, Jesus was born in a stable. Luke does not provide any evidence that her time for giving birth came as she was approaching the city, so there was no reason for panic. There is nothing in the text that hints that the baby was pressing as they arrived.

The Christian Standard Bible (CSB) translation reads they “laid Him in a feeding trough” (Luke 2:7), eliciting images of a stable. However, there are three options for the location of the feeding trough. The first is outside of a home in a stable (the traditional understanding). But when one understands how a first-century house in Israel was constructed, two other options become available. Houses were constructed with an open floor plan, with a family room and an animal room, with no walls separating them (the animal room was at a lower level). On the raised surface in the family room

would be a stone/rock feeding trough for the larger animals carved out of the floor. The smaller animals would have a smaller trough carved into the floor of the animal room (or, less likely, a wooden trough). The most likely location for Jesus’ manger is the family room. But if the family was turned away from the inn, then why am I describing a house?

The New International Version (NIV) translation of Luke 2:7 is helpful: “Because there was no guest room available for them.” The evidence for this translation can be gleaned from Luke 22:11 and Mark 14:14 where Jesus ate the Passover meal in a guest room. Joseph and Mary were turned away from a “guest room,” not from an inn. Jesus was most likely born in the family room and placed into the feeding trough for animals located in the floor. There was no cave, no stable, and probably no wooden trough. Jesus’ birth was truly humble, and it underscores the significance of the incarnation as a demonstration of God’s love and salvation for humanity.

## WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE...ARE WHAT?

The Christmas carol “We Three Kings of Orient Are” is derived from Matthew 2:1. The carol inaccurately depicts three kings coming from the Orient. Nothing in the biblical text says there were three people. This misunderstanding might have come from the fact that there were three gifts. The text never refers to them as kings. Instead, they were likely scholars skilled in various disciplines. Scripture never says they were from the Orient, but from the east. The gifts suggest that they were more likely from Persia or Babylon. While the carol is popular, there likely weren’t

three, they weren’t kings, and they weren’t from the Orient.

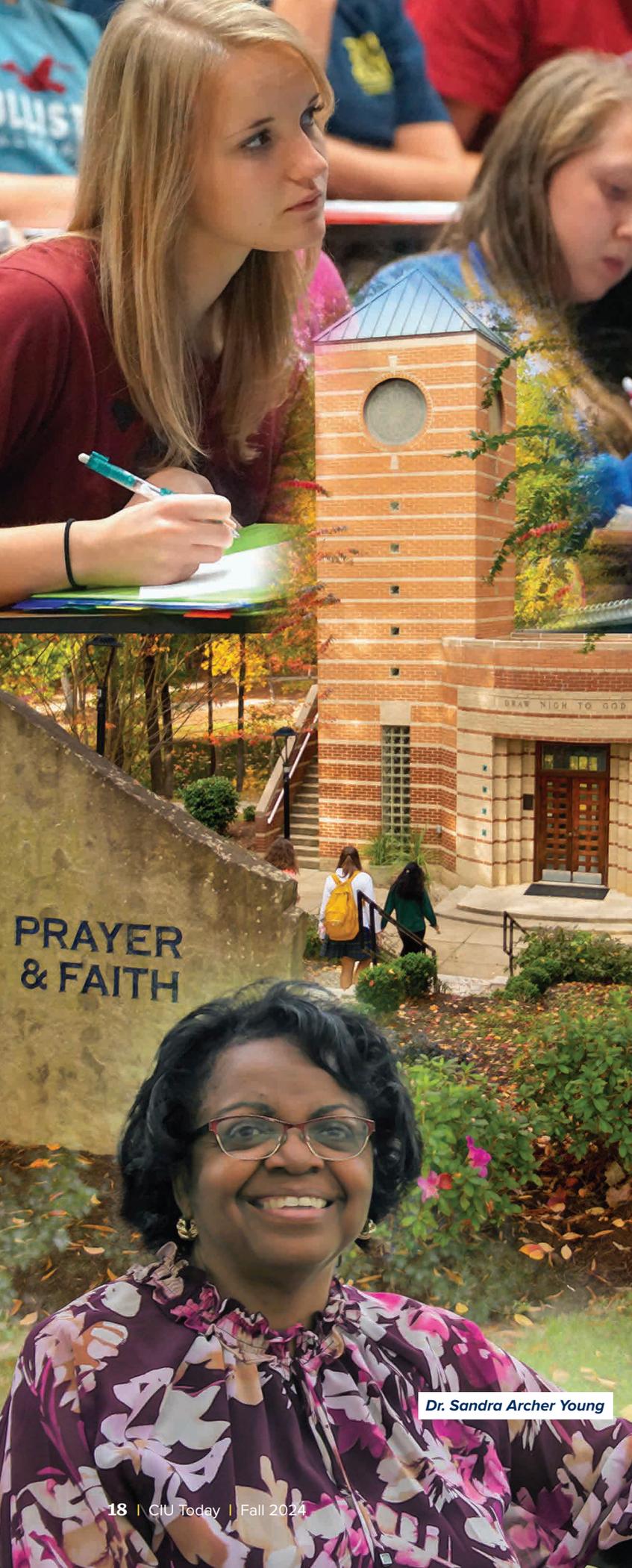
The main reason to challenge the carol’s depiction of the wise men is because it detracts from Matthew’s true purpose for this account: the worship of Jesus as king, a significant theme in Matthew’s Gospel.

## SHEPHERDS WERE SOCIETAL OUTCASTS?

There is a common misperception that the shepherds mentioned in Luke 2:8–12 were societal outcasts, considered despised and unclean people. But evidence from the Old and New Testaments associates shepherding with revered figures such as Abraham, Moses, and David, as well as with God Himself. God’s choice to announce the birth of Jesus to shepherds underscores the inclusive nature of the gospel message, reaching out to the poor and humble. This misunderstanding relies more on sources such as Aristotle and the Babylonian Talmud than Scripture. Shepherds are consistently portrayed positively in the biblical narrative, though it was a humble profession, and they were typically poor. God chose to use the poor and humble components of society to share his wonderful announcement of the birth of his Son. Jesus came not only for the rich, but for everyone.

## A WORD OF CAUTION!

I encourage you not to use the information in this article to criticize pastors or speakers who propagate these legends unintentionally. If you talk with a church leader about the contents of this article, use a respectful approach to address the misconceptions and gently offer advice on how to engage with such interpretations constructively. ■



# To Know Him:

## Encountering Spiritual Formation at CIU

*By Dr. Sandra Archer Young*

**I**t was Finals Week at CIU. That Wednesday, right after lunch, I stood at the podium and waited as students entered the classroom. One by one, each found the seat they had occupied throughout the semester. Each sat down, zipped open their book bags, and pulled out their laptops.

“Dr. Young, I changed my mind,” announced one student who rarely had much to say in class. “I don’t want to be the last one to present. I’m ready!”

“I’m feeling pretty good about my presentation,” said another student. He was trying not to boast, but he couldn’t help himself. “It’s pretty good!”

As I listened to the banter in the room, I realized that the students were enthusiastic and even proud of what they had prepared. Their comments encouraged me since most students are nervous and apprehensive when approaching a final exam. This, however, wasn’t a typical final exam. Students weren’t required to memorize a list of facts, write an essay, or apply a formula. The final exam for MSD 1110 Encountering Spiritual Formation, a three-credit course required of almost all first-semester students at CIU, represented the culmination of a 21-day Spiritual Transformation Plan completed several weeks earlier.

Just before midterm, students were challenged to examine themselves honestly, identify an area of their spiritual life that needed improvement, and then select one or two

*Dr. Sandra Archer Young*

spiritual disciplines to help them close that gap. After conferencing with me, students refined their implemented plan after midterm. Today they would share their spiritual transformation plans with their classmates and comment on the final results.

Encountering Spiritual Formation is a relatively new course for undergraduates, challenging students to strengthen their personal relationship with Jesus Christ through emphasizing the spiritual disciplines.

James McCall, assistant dean for the College of Arts & Sciences, updates the course syllabus annually and recruits instructors. He also teaches the course at least once each semester.

“As our motto is to both Know Him and to Make Him Known, this course focuses on the “to Know Him” portion. In this class, students learn about the core spiritual disciplines and how to incorporate them into their lives,” says McCall. “This course also serves as a way for students to learn about CIU’s unique history and core values and a way for them to connect with fellow students with whom they will be in other classes throughout their time at CIU.”

It was time to begin. I announced the lineup for presentations and took a seat in the back of the room with my stopwatch. I gave the signal and the sharing began. The students talked for six to eight minutes about the goals they had selected for their spiritual transformation. One by one, students eagerly approached the front of the classroom. Each downloaded his or her PowerPoint presentation and projected it on the large screen. Some PowerPoints were expertly designed in terms of graphics, photos and readable text. Some needed a little work. All, however, communicated what had transpired in each presenter’s life over 21 days.

While their goals varied, most chose to establish a regular prayer time or a regular time for Bible study. Many students recognized that their prayer life was erratic or much too brief; others admitted that they needed to prioritize a regular sustained time to read God’s Word. One student hoped that in 21 days, he could better manage feelings of anger.

As we listened to each student share their goals and the results of their 21-Day Plan, the atmosphere shifted from “reporting” to “testifying.” One student shared how rebellion had landed him in a spiritual hole.

Another student shared an unexpected byproduct of the 21-Day Plan: he found a way to forgive a family member whom he had not spoken to in years.

One of the requirements of the plan was to identify an accountability partner. I found it interesting that the majority of the students asked their mothers to serve in this role.

One student whose goal was to develop a stronger prayer life shared that his mom “would call me and later on my grandmother would text me to see if I had prayed that day.”

After the last shared “testimony,” a collective understanding seemed to settle in the room. We all realized that none of us were perfect. Some of us had fallen short of our goals. But we also recognized the very real possibility of spiritual growth and change. We witnessed firsthand how godly habits are formed. And we understood more clearly how personal times of prayer and Bible study can genuinely usher in God’s presence.

At the end of the exam time, we prayed. Students said their goodbyes for the semester and left the classroom, some to study for another exam or write a paper and others to finish packing and clean their dormitory rooms. As I gathered my paperwork, I left the room strangely warmed and grateful

“  
*I left the room  
strangely warmed  
and grateful for  
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students.”*

—DR. SANDRA ARCHER YOUNG

for the opportunity to participate in and watch what God is doing in the lives of first-year CIU college students.

I appreciate this means of gently pushing students, through assignments and experiences, toward authentic spiritual growth. Gaining a personal relationship with God is not left to chance on our campus. Encountering Spiritual Formation at CIU is a course that is both deliberate and intentional for the son of missionaries or the student who has no clue how to find the book of Acts in the Bible. For many students, the required introduction to the spiritual disciplines is a method that accomplishes exactly what we had hoped: the opportunity to know a God who desires to be known. ■

GINAVRA GIBSON ('12/'15)

# “A Passion for Loving People”

## Clinical Counseling Professor and CIU Alumnus Passes it on to Her Students

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

**D**r. Ginavra Gibson loves studying ancient Egyptian history. She even thought about getting an archeology degree and digging up bones in the desert. But there was a greater passion in her life.

“I really wanted to minister to people,” said Gibson, an associate professor of Clinical Counseling at Columbia International University. “Can’t do counseling if they’re not alive,” she added with a laugh during an interview in her office.

Gibson joined the Graduate Counseling Program faculty in 2023 after serving as an adjunct faculty member since 2020. She teaches primarily in areas of practical skill development such as Counseling Techniques and Advance Counseling Techniques.

### But first, a CIU student

However, Gibson’s relationship with CIU goes back further. The New Jersey native was being homeschooled when, in her high school senior year, she decided Youth Ministry was her future and made the trip to her father’s home state of South Carolina to check out CIU undergraduate ministry programs. She immediately knew she was where God wanted her to be.

“I’ve heard this from a number of people — when you step on to campus, there’s just something different about the atmosphere — coming down The Boulevard, seeing the (international) flags, the inviting nature of everyone I came into contact with, the love for the Lord — there was just a presence on the campus,” Gibson said. “This was where I needed to be. It just somehow grips you.”

Gibson earned her CIU undergraduate degree in Church Ministry in 2012, and a CIU master’s degree in Clinical Counseling in 2015, but admits that growing up, “I didn’t even know what a counselor was, and didn’t have a whole lot of concept of mental health. But I knew I had a heart for people.”

### Counseling in State and Local Government

After graduation that heart for people would take Gibson to leadership roles at the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, including program director of adult clinic services at Columbia Area Mental Health Center and clinic director of adult services at Lexington County Community Mental Health Center. She has extensive experience providing community crisis intervention and supervising community crisis teams. That includes the day on



Dr. Ginavra Gibson

**Enrollment for CIU’s M.A. in Clinical Counseling has more than doubled over the past three years.**



Student D'Asha Crawford poses with Gibson: “Her influence has been extremely special to me.”

“

*What I’m teaching in this class is how to remove barriers to loving people well.”*

—GINAVRA GIBSON (‘12/‘15)

the crisis phone line with a woman who was about to take her own life.

“She had taken a bunch of pills ... and I was on one phone trying to keep her awake,” Gibson recalled. “On another phone I was dialing 9-1-1. Because she was an established client I knew where she was. So, I just kept her awake long enough until 9-1-1 could get there. Then, thankfully, her mother came home. I yelled over the phone, ‘9-1-1 is on the way. You need to keep her awake.’ 9-1-1 showed up. They took her to the hospital. She was OK.”

That is valuable experience to pass along in the classroom.

“I really appreciate my time at the Department of Mental Health because we worked with people who really had no other place to go,” Gibson said. “I learned so much working with those clients and I really loved it — loved working with individuals who needed someone to be on their side when they didn’t have anyone else. It really informs so much of what I do and teach as a counselor-educator because I had to learn how to be resourceful and do a lot with very little.”

That kind of knowledge and experience is appreciated by the dean of the Seminary & School of Counseling, Dr. David Croteau.

“Dr. Gibson brings to the team a specialty in Dialectical Behavior Therapy that is very important for treating clients with particular emotional issues,” Croteau said, and adding “her communication skills and emotional IQ are exceptional.”

### Multicultural Counseling

Gibson practices as a licensed professional counselor and holds a number of professional memberships including with the American Counseling Association (ACA), the Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD), and Counselors for Social Justice (CSJ). Her doctoral dissertation from The University of the Cumberland was on Black female counselor experiences and on clients who come from diverse backgrounds. She teaches CIU’s Multicultural Counseling course.

“What I’m teaching in this class is how to remove barriers to loving people well,” Gibson explained. “I love being a part of the multicultural aspect of ACA because I love learning new ways to remove barriers to effectively care for people.”

### Educating from a Biblical Worldview

As with every program at CIU, Clinical Counseling is taught from a biblical worldview, something that Gibson appreciated when she was a student in the program.

“I got so much from seeing how my faith informs my role as a counselor,” Gibson said. And now, she passes that along to her students, especially in the Multicultural Counseling course.

“We explore diverse identities, racial, cultural, genders, sexuality, socio-economic — and we look at what the Scriptures say about how to love others, how to care for others,” Gibson

said. “I think our faith fully informs how to engage with others, especially those who are lost — working with those who are broken — all of that is in the Bible. It shows up in everything.”

### On a Journey with Her Students

When Gibson is asked, “What is your hope for your students when class is dismissed?” she takes a deep and long breath and responds:

“That I will have fueled their passion for loving people through God’s eyes,” are her first words. “We are loving people through pain, and we are helping them reach their goals and navigate through their struggles ... that is the heart of God. I hope that I foster that in students. I want to be a part of their journey in impacting others.”

D’Asha Crawford is on that journey. The Clinical Counseling student calls Gibson her mentor.

“To see a young black woman — the counselor (and) person that you have always wanted to be is so special,” said Crawford who is African American. “She motivates me to keep pushing through because she has been where I have been. Her influence has been extremely special to me. When I go on in my profession as a therapist I will always sing her praises and I will never forget her.” ■

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Photo courtesy of Jono Ribeiro via Flickr

**VOLODYMYR DEGTYARYOV ('01)**

# Ukrainian Bible Seminary with CIU Roots

*Continues Despite War at its Doorstep*

*By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer*

**I**t's not what you expect when you receive a ministry newsletter update.

Attached to the email was a mobile phone video. The first thing you see is a building on fire. About a block away, a woman covers her face. Her expression is fearful. Four small boys next to her look around in bewilderment.

What you hear are air raid sirens followed by a whirring sound as the camera points upward.

It's an incoming missile.

One of the boys seems to instinctively move into a crouched position as he watches the missile fly overhead. It lands on the burning building adding to the flames and smoke with a thunderous blast. The children scream as they scurry next to

the woman and quickly move in the opposite direction from the growing fire.

It's another day at the edge of the war zone in the city of Zaporizhzhia in eastern Ukraine, the home of Zaporizhzhia Bible Seminary (ZBS).

## The CIU Connection

ZBS was founded by Columbia International University alumna Joanne Mackey ('87 master's degree in Bible) and her husband Mark in 1994 soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and a new beginning for Ukraine as a free nation.

CIU alumnus, Volodymyr Degtyaryov, who shot the video and sent the newsletter, said in an online interview that what supporters of ZBS were shown has become common as

Ukraine is regularly attacked since the Russian invasion in 2022.

Degtyaryov, who earned a master’s degree from CIU in 2001 served as president of ZBS for 15 years and now holds the title of development director. He makes sure the school is on solid financial footing even in the midst of war — something he has gotten used to.

“It was a miracle no one was hurt,” Degtyaryov said of the scene in the video, noting that the building was a hotel in downtown Zaporizhzhia that was hosting a children’s camp just an hour and half prior to the strike.

“Every time you hear a boom, you pray that it does not hit an apartment building,” Degtyaryov added.

### Ministry in the Midst of War

But even in war, the ministry of ZBS goes on. When the war first began the ZBS facilities were a place of rest for refugees fleeing to western Ukraine and Poland. Now, Degtyaryov says classes are still held, but many of them online and some at extension sites in western Ukraine and Germany for obvious reasons.

“You wouldn’t let your child go to a war zone,” Degtyaryov said with dry humor in his voice.

### ZBS: The Early Years

But Degtyaryov’s face brightens and his voice livens with excitement when asked about the CIU-ZBS connection and recalls with fondness the CIU professors who taught at ZBS in its early years.

“I remember it was exciting for me,” Degtyaryov said. “CIU helped prepare future teachers for us.”

“

*There is a spiritual hunger that comes when life’s circumstances are bad. That hunger is evident in Ukraine now.”*

—JOANNE MACKEY ('87)



◀ ZBS founders  
Mark and Joanne  
Mackey

Among those who travelled from Columbia to Ukraine to teach at ZBS was longtime CIU Professor Dr. Kevin McWilliams whose topic was “The Life of Christ.”

“Two other teachers who were supposed to be there for that session were not able to make it at the last minute,” McWilliams recalls. “Classes were combined so that I ended up with something like 60 in the class — most all of them current pastors and other leaders in local churches. It was an amazing privilege to be teaching them. They were eager and hungry to learn all they could so the response was quite encouraging.”

CIU would later accept five ZBS graduates to study in CIU’s master’s programs. One of them was Degtyaryov and another was current ZBS President Andriy Konoval’chuk.

### A Spiritual Hunger

These days, health issues keep ZBS founders Mark and Joanne Mackey at a home base in Seattle. But they are still active with the school and keep in touch with ZBS as Mark transitions away from chairman of the ZBS Board of Directors.

“We hear wonderful stories from our ZBS/CIU grads about how churches are well-attended during this war, how people have a spiritual hunger, and how local churches are open to offering humanitarian assistance to needy people,” Joanne wrote in an email exchange. “There is a spiritual hunger that comes when life’s circumstances are bad. That hunger is evident in Ukraine now.”

In spite of war, Joanne reports that ZBS is growing. At the end of the 2023 spring semester, the school reported the largest student body in its history with many of the students studying at the extension sites.

“The new locations make it possible for ZBS profs to train more people in courses that are relevant for today’s changing circumstances,” Joanne wrote.

Meanwhile back in Zaporizhzhia, Volodymyr Degtyaryov says he always has a backpack stocked with essentials at hand if bombs start to fall and he has to flee. And he prays that Ukrainians will continue to turn to God and not harden their hearts toward Him because of the war.

“People say, ‘Where is God?’ because so many children are killed,” Degtyaryov said. “We pray for a just peace. Pray that God does a miracle and this war comes to an end.” ■



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Oppenhuizen with her CISP students on a field day.

**JODI OPPENHUIZEN ('24)**

# Reaching the Nations Through International Christian Education

## *Ph.D. Alumna Serving in the Czech Republic*

*By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer*

**A**s CIU graduates of the Class of '24 celebrated with friends and family in The Quad following the spring commencement ceremony, a familiar figure stood nearby taking in the scene. It was former CIU president Dr. George Murray who noted a woman across The Quad whom he had met many years ago when she was an undergraduate student at another college and he was a guest speaker for the college's missions conference.

During the conference, the student sought out Murray and told him she wanted to be a missionary. "Then you're at the wrong school," Murray joked. But she took him seriously.

Jodi Oppenhuizen would finish her undergraduate degree at that college, but would go on to earn a Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and

Intercultural Studies from CIU, an Educational Specialist degree from CIU, and that day in The Quad, she was celebrating her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from CIU.

As director of Christian International School of Prague (CISP) in the Czech Republic, Dr. Oppenhuizen is using education as a means to reaching the nations. A native of Grand Rapids, Michigan, she says her call to missionary work came while in high school, but her vision for the world was expanded during an internship to the Czech Republic as part of her CIU master's program in the late 1990s. She has been in the Czech Republic ever since.

"I was involved in church planting for a number of years and I started working at the school in 2013," said Oppenhuizen, who initially served CISP as a school counselor and AP

psychology teacher. “Just before the pandemic, the previous director told our school he would be stepping down ... I was asked to be on a leadership team and I eventually applied to be director, and now I have been the director for over three years.”

CISP just celebrated its 20th anniversary with a mission to provide “from a biblical perspective, an academically excellent and practically oriented education within a loving community,” and a vision to educate “students who are followers of Jesus among the nations expressing their faith by thinking biblically, and loving and serving their communities for Him.”

Oppenhuizen explains that the school, with 165 students from 30 nations and accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), combines many approaches to spreading the gospel through an international school.

“In our school, the ways we see God at work is that one-third of our students are from 10-40 Window countries with 25% of those students coming from the nation of India,” Oppenhuizen said. “10-11% of our students are Czechs, we have local students, and 25% of our students are MKs (Missionary Kids). We also have the next generation in our school — kids between the ages of six and 19.”

“

*The only challenge is that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.”*

—JODI OPPENHUIZEN ('24)

Oppenhuizen also notes that CISP is assisting various organizations such as a Christian school in Ukraine affected by the war in that country.

“That school actually moved into the Czech Republic for a year,” Oppenhuizen said. “These Christian educators are amazing. They continue to have their school in the midst of a war. We’ve been able to encourage and help them in whatever way we can.”

While some Christian international schools are coming under government scrutiny in some parts of the world, Oppenhuizen points out there is religious freedom in the Czech Republic.

“We don’t have the government chasing us down. We just have a great big green light to share the gospel day in and day out with students and their families from 30 different nations.”

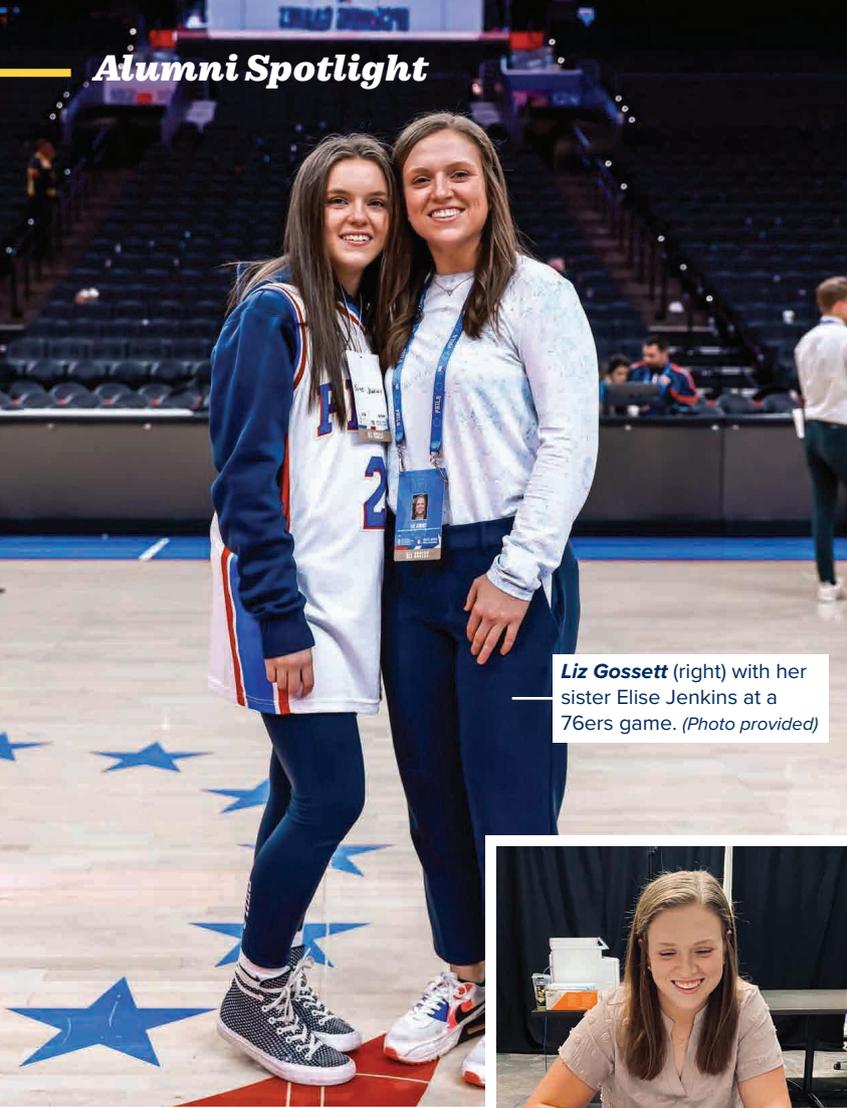
Now, Oppenhuizen just needs teachers. The demand for education at CISP is the highest it has ever been in the school’s 20-year history. They have students who are on a waiting list — and they have to turn them away.

“The only challenge is that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few,” Oppenhuizen said. “And so, we are asking the Lord of the harvest to send out the workers. He is sending out the workers, but we need more.” ■

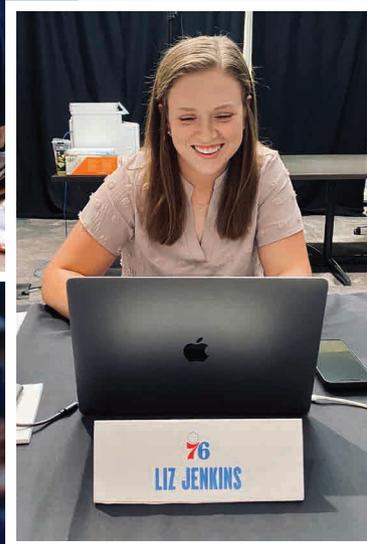


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▶ Dr. Oppenhuizen celebrates her doctoral degree with former CIU President Dr. George Murray who introduced her to CIU.



Liz Gossett (right) with her sister Elise Jenkins at a 76ers game. (Photo provided)



(Photo provided)



## LIZ JENKINS ('17)

# Sizing Up the Big Leaguers

## Former CIU Ram "Scouts" for Professional Basketball Talent

By Bob Holmes, Senior Writer

Liz (Jenkins) Gossett "scouts" the nations looking for some of the best basketball players on the planet. Those skills were sharpened early on as a student in CIU's Sport Management program and in the Moore Fitness Center as a member of the CIU Rams women's basketball team.

Gossett, who graduated from CIU in 2017, is a scout for the Philadelphia 76ers of the National Basketball Association (NBA). She has been with the organization for five seasons, and after working behind the scenes was promoted to scout over a year ago where she eyes talent at the collegiate and high school level.

"I'm on the road about 70% of the time, watching games, going to practices, meeting coaches," Gossett said in a July phone interview as she headed to South Carolina for a tournament featuring the nations' top high school players. That's a short trip from her new home base of Charlotte after living in downtown Philadelphia for five years. "About 30% of my time is watching film, supplementing what I've seen live," explaining why her new position is considered "remote."

### What is she looking for?

After South Carolina, she would be heading further south — to South Africa and then to Europe. But no matter where she travels, she is looking for three components as she considers potential future members of the 76ers: athleticism (physical gifts such as size), skill (shooting and passing) and what she calls "the intangible."

"Their work ethic, their character, what kind of teammate they are, their sportsmanship," Gossett explained. "A good player is going to have a mesh of those three."

**Breaking ground for women**

But, isn't it unusual for an NBA team to have a female scout who is "sizing up" the ability of male athletes such as 76ers' standout Joel Embiid who stands seven feet tall and weighs 280?

"It is, it is," admits Gossett. "There are not many of us females who are in scouting," adding that she knows of five or six in the NBA. But she says that is changing as the NBA is "putting a priority on having female voices in the room."

"Because if you know basketball, you know basketball," Gossett said. "It doesn't matter if you are male or female. If you know the game and you can communicate what you know in a way that others can understand, it doesn't matter who you are. It definitely helps to have a different perspective in the room."

**Sport Management class on the road**

Gossett credits the CIU Sport Management program and especially the former professor who helped establish the program, Dr. Wayne Rasmussen, for helping lay the foundation for her career, as he introduced students to important people in important places. For example, he took students on a West Coast trip where they stopped at major sporting facilities such as the Rose Bowl and had a meeting with the Los Angeles Lakers of the NBA.

"In this industry, he would remind us it's all about who you know, and who knows you," Gossett said. "That's what I tell people a lot. Who knows you and who you know is going to get your foot in the door, (then) you have to seal the deal ... you have to put forth your best effort. I've been able to be successful because of what I learned in those (Sport Management) classes."

**Ram Leader**

Gossett also credits her success to her time on the hardwood of the Moore Fitness Center with the CIU Rams as a transfer student from 2015 to 2017. She is in the Rams' record books for being among the top five in: assists in a season; assists in a career; and career three-point field goal percentage. She seemed amused upon hearing that news.

“

*I've been able to be successful because of what I learned in those (Sport Management) classes.”*

—LIZ (JENKINS) GOSSETT ('17)

"To know those still stand, that's a good feeling. But I wouldn't be mad if they were broken," she laughed.

**“Shooting Touch”**

Dear to Gossett's heart is the year she worked in Rwanda with the international nonprofit sport-for-development organization Shooting Touch, whose mission is "to use the mobilizing power of basketball to bridge health and opportunity gaps for youth and women facing racial, gender, and economic inequalities."

"When I was there we built a (basketball) court in a new village ... we had four or five courts in an eastern providence and I oversaw the operation side of things and some of the health curriculum," Gossett said, adding that it also developed her character in a number of ways.

"It was really hard. Moving to the other side of the world, not knowing anyone, (and) not knowing the language, stretched me and pushed me spiritually, mentally, physically ... I think doing hard things is important to building character and to develop perseverance and grit ... I got out of my comfort zone. I knew the Lord had me there for a reason."

And one of those reasons was to lead her to the 76ers. A friend who had worked with Shooting Touch became employed by the 76ers and she says "he got my foot in the door."

"If I had not allowed the Lord to lead me to work with Shooting Touch, I would not be where I am now."

**NBA Draft Night**

Among the memorable moments for Gossett as a scout is being in the room with the 76ers upper management on draft night.

"You've worked all year for this moment," Gossett said. "It's the culmination of a year's worth of work and a lot of late nights and a lot of travel. It's fulfilling."

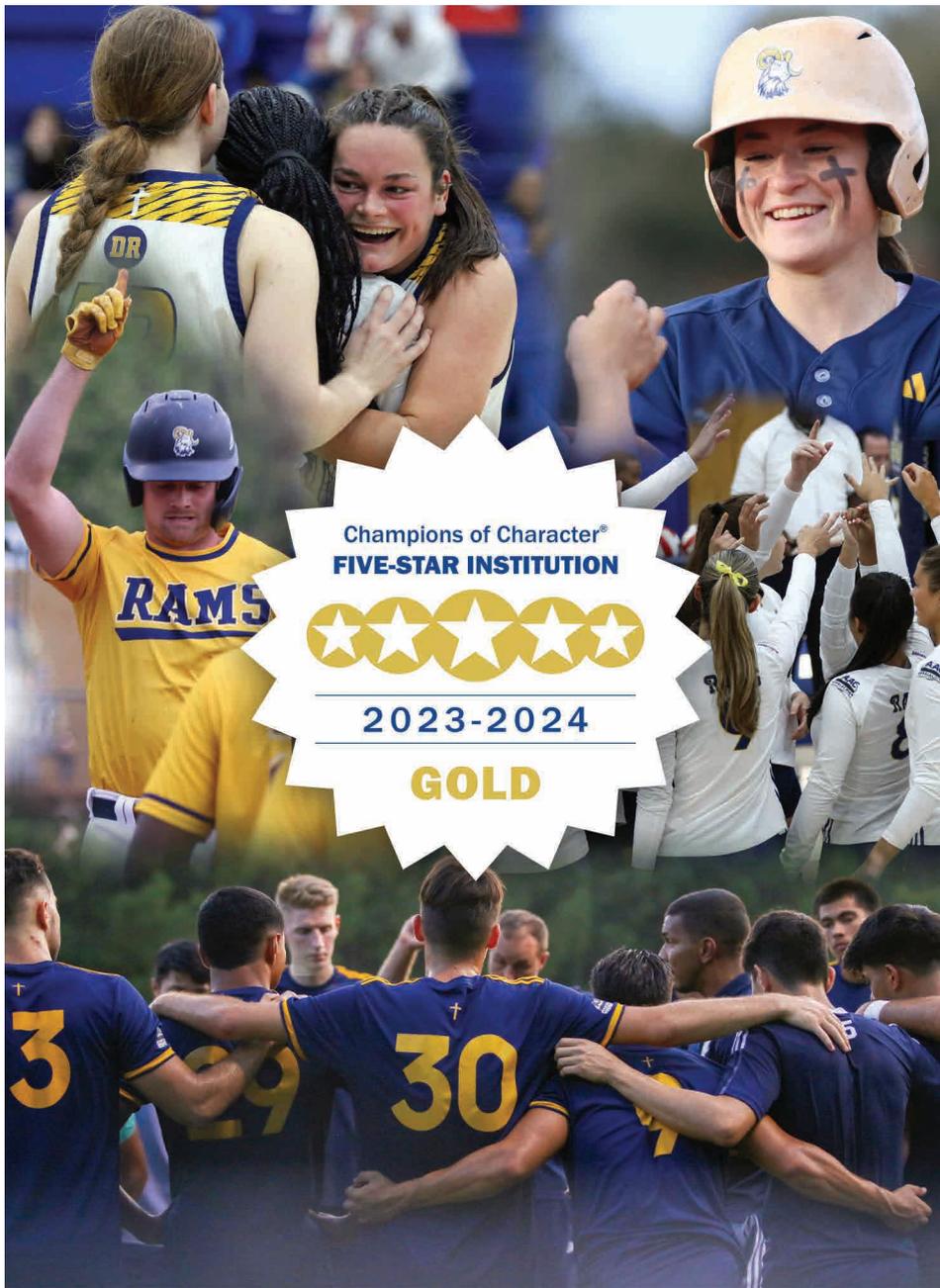
But as you might expect, the big goal is an NBA championship. The 76ers haven't won one since 1983. "That's what we're all working toward," she said.

Meanwhile, she is searching for the talent to make that happen. And loving it.

"It's a really cool job. Super unique, and it's fun to talk about, and fun to do for sure." ■



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## Champions of Character RAMS DESIGNATED WITH THE NAIA'S HIGHEST HONOR

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) named Columbia International University a Five-Star Champions of Character® Institution at the Gold Level. The Rams were among 107 NAIA institutions to achieve a perfect score of 100 for the 2023-2024 academic year.

The Five-Star Champions of Character designation represents the NAIA's highest honor, awarded to schools that excel in promoting core values such as integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership. To qualify, institutions must show a comprehensive commitment to these principles throughout their athletic programs and campus culture. ■



## Stefan Vasiloff

### Named New Athletics Director

The new CIU Athletics Director is no stranger to the Rams.

Stefan Vasiloff previously served as CIU's assistant athletics director for game day operations and facilities, and most recently, provided leadership as interim athletics director.

Vasiloff brings a wealth of diverse leadership experiences having served in ministry and business opportunities. He has been a lead operational manager, small business owner, and senior pastor.

Vasiloff is also no stranger to college athletics. He is a member of the Athletic Hall of Fame at Ohio Christian University where he was a three-year letter-winner and a National Christian College Athletic Association All-American. Additionally, for nearly 10 years, he was a men's basketball official across multiple states in the Midwest and Southeast United States.

He replaces the late Darren Richie who passed away in December after contracting bacterial meningitis while supporting the women's soccer team on a tournament trip in Florida.

"Since his passing, it has been in my heart to honor Darren's life and leadership. I envision our team thriving," Vasiloff said. "From our coaches and student-athletes to our graduate assistants and support staff. I want to see them thrive. I'm very excited for the future possibilities that lie ahead." ■



## Coach of the Year

### CONGRATS TO MENS BASKETBALL COACH STOCKMAN

CIU Men's Basketball Head Coach Tony Stockman is the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA) South Region Coach of the Year. Stockman guided the Rams to a 20-12 overall season record and a berth in the Appalachian Athletic Conference (AAC) Tournament Championship game. He also led his team to the No. 1 overall seed in the NCCAA South Region Tournament and the No. 9 overall ranking in the final NCCAA Coaches Poll. ■



### NEW WOMEN'S BASKETBALL COACH

Mark Molder is the new CIU women's head basketball coach. He comes to CIU with a decade of coaching experience for his alma mater, NAIA institution Oklahoma Wesleyan University (OKWU).

While at the helm of the OKWU women's program, Molder led the Eagles to two NAIA Championship Tournaments and guided OKWU to their only Midlands Collegiate Athletic Conference (MCAC) Championship in women's basketball program history.

Molder says CIU aligns with his desire to see athletes grow as individuals and in their faith.

"CIU is a special place that is committed to the mission of providing students a Christ-centered education on and off the court," Molder said. ■

## NATIONAL CHAMPION

### Deandre Leith wins NAIA Shot Put Championship

CIU Rams shot putter Deandre Leith, a senior, brought home CIU's first-ever NAIA outdoor individual championship in the spring with a school record mark of 18.09m at the NAIA Outdoor Track and Field Championships held in Marion, Indiana.

Leith is the second CIU track and field athlete to be distinguished as an NAIA national champion besides three-time indoor Pole Vault champion John-Hunter James.

Leith was joined in the shot put by freshman Cameron Montgomery, who finished top-25 posting a mark of 15.68m.

The Rams finished 22nd out of the 77 teams that scored. Leith is planning on becoming an evangelist after graduation. ■





## CIU Students Thank Donors at Appreciation Lunch

(Left photo) **Gvidon Stamboltsyan**, a student from Armenia greets “M,” a student from Azerbaijan on the platform at the Partner Appreciation Lunch.

(Right photo) CIU student-athlete **Mercy Berkemeyer** thanks CIU Fund donor Catherine Hoecke.

Paris Acquah is a Columbia International University student because of a billboard her father saw on Interstate 20 linking South Carolina and her home state of Georgia. It was advertising CIU’s new nursing program — a major she wanted to pursue. But Ms. Acquah also says she is a CIU student because of CIU scholarship donors, some of whom she met at CIU’s annual Partner Appreciation Luncheon.

“The University of Miami offered me a full-tuition scholarship, but God told me to let go of that for CIU,” Acquah said after the luncheon. “I didn’t know if I could afford it, but the donor scholarship changed everything. I’m grateful for that.”

Dozens of students took turns at a microphone to briefly introduce themselves and thank the donors. Among them was Charles Hines. It was only the second time that Hines has stepped foot on campus. The pastor from Monroe, North Carolina is an online student in the Master of Arts in Care and Counseling program. He was awarded the Robertson McQuilkin Seminary Scholarship named for CIU’s third president, a prominent figure in CIU history.

“It’s good to be among people and

see the culture here at the school,” which he adds matches his online experience.

Among the donors were CIU adjunct music teachers Russ and Carol Rhodes who sponsor the Rhodes Scholarship for Music majors, some of whom sat at their table.

“We get to hear what their heart is like and what they are interested in doing with their music training,” said Mr. Rhodes. “It’s a real blessing for us to have a meal with them and learn more about their ministry.”

At the conclusion of the luncheon, CIU President Dr. Bill Jones introduced “M” (name withheld), an Intercultural Studies major from the Muslim country of Azerbaijan where he serves as a church planter.

“I have a passion to go back to Azerbaijan and preach the light of the

gospel to those people who have never heard about Jesus Christ,” M said.

M was joined on the stage by Gvidon Stamboltsyan, a student from Armenia, which borders Azerbaijan. Jones noted that the countries represented by the two students have been at war for hundreds of years, but added:

“At CIU, because they are brothers in Christ, now they are fighting together against an unseen enemy.”

That brought the luncheon to an end with a rousing round of applause from all in attendance. ■



See an inspiring video from the Appreciation Lunch by scanning this QR code.

“

*We get to hear what their heart is like and what they are interested in doing with their music training. It’s a real blessing for us to have a meal with them and learn more about their ministry.”*

—CIU scholarship donors, Ross & Carol Rhodes

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**MARY RUTH WISE ('51)** at the young age of 95 continues to edit material for mission work in Peru. She assisted in the translation and publication of the Yanesha New Testament and is excited that the Yanesha Old Testament is being translated and published. ✉ [Maryruth\\_wise@sil.org](mailto:Maryruth_wise@sil.org)

**1 WILFRED ('55) & NANCY CHANDLER** along with another missionary couple created the newly published card and board game, WisKnol (Wisdom and Knowledge), a unique Christian game for fun, fellowship and learning. ✉ [nchandleruw@gmail.com](mailto:nchandleruw@gmail.com)

**PAUL ('61) & JEAN SYWULKA** are back in the United States after 56 years serving at the Central American Theological Seminary, SETECA, in Guatemala. ✉ [psywulka@seteca.edu](mailto:psywulka@seteca.edu)

**2 TED ('64) & GRACE HAAS** After 10 years as missionaries in the western Arctic, they moved to Regina, Saskatchewan for seminary, and ultimately, on to congregational ministry until retirement in 2007. They live in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan. ✉ [ted.haas.215@gmail.com](mailto:ted.haas.215@gmail.com)

**3 BOB ('65) & "SCOTTI" (SCOTT) HAMMOND ('66)** are thankful and praising God for His wonderful love and care for them over the years! ✉ [b8man@startmail.com](mailto:b8man@startmail.com)

**4 LAWRENCE ('66) & JANE (MCDANIEL) BATEMAN ('64)** launched their ministry in 1966, served in evangelism with Open Air Campaigners, Child Evangelism Fellowship, and pastor of churches in Virginia, Illinois, North Carolina and South Carolina where they retired. ✉ [b8man@startmail.com](mailto:b8man@startmail.com)



**5 HELEN LOUISE HERNDON ('67)** is a freelance writer published in major national newspaper op-eds and religiously diverse Christian publications. She is a former missionary to North Africa, a retired employee of the St. Louis Public School District, and lives in Kirkwood, Missouri. ✉ [hloherndon@cs.com](mailto:hloherndon@cs.com)

**DAVID ('70/'72) & KAREN NESS** are in phased retirement ministering to university faculty in Cru's Faculty Commons ministry. From 1985 to 1993 they taught at Cru's Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST). ✉ [dcness428@gmail.com](mailto:dcness428@gmail.com)

**LARRY WEIDMAN ('77)** After serving at CIU radio station WMHK for four years (1976-1980), he and his wife, Janet, returned to Pennsylvania where they established WGRC, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. He retired in 2012 after which they moved to Cumming, Georgia to be near family, where he now serves the Lord as a certified tennis instructor. ✉ [connect2larryweidman@gmail.com](mailto:connect2larryweidman@gmail.com)

**6 DAN ('80) & PAIGE KNUDSEN** After 40 years in education, most recently as a high school principal, Dan is now the associate pastor at Madison Methodist Church in Madison, Georgia, a church plant that is part of the newly-formed Global Methodist Church. He lives in Madison with his wife Paige and has four adult daughters. ✉ [dknudsen1@gmail.com](mailto:dknudsen1@gmail.com)

**7 PAUL & JENNIE (VAN KUREN) GARRISON ('84)** Paul has just retired from full-time ministry as a senior pastor. Jennie is now working as an accessibility specialist at High Point University in North Carolina where they moved to be with their three daughters, six grandsons and one granddaughter. ✉ [jens3littlewomen@gmail.com](mailto:jens3littlewomen@gmail.com)

**WALTER JOHNSTON ('85)** After 23 years in the Philippines, Walter began serving in campus ministry to international graduate students at Penn State University in 2010. ✉ [walt1636@gmail.com](mailto:walt1636@gmail.com)

**8 ROBERT SIPPER ('86)** is serving in his 37th year of full-time ministry in the local church. He met his wife, **DEBRA (HOLLEY) ('86)** at CIU. They have been married for 38 years. ✉ [bob@ebconnect.org](mailto:bob@ebconnect.org)

**9 DAVID FISH ('87)**, who served on the mission field in Santiago, Chile for 18 years, retired in June 2024 after 30 years of teaching at Ozark Christian College in Joplin, Missouri. In 2016, he created the Reverse Interlinear for the Nueva Versión Internacional (the Spanish language equivalent of the NIV). ✉ [dfishocc@gmail.com](mailto:dfishocc@gmail.com)

**CHRIS ('91) & MARY ELLEN ('91) REBER** now live in North Carolina after serving for 16 years in Bangladesh. God directed them to write and publish over 37 booklets on discipleship and three booklets on evangelism through Wine From the True Vine Ministry. ✉ [chris@winefromthetruevine.com](mailto:chris@winefromthetruevine.com)

**10 JOHN WILLIAMS ('91)** was inducted into the Rolling Hills Schools (Meadowbrook) Alumni Hall of Fame in Cambridge, Ohio. He had the opportunity to share his testimony, his calling to help people have the Scriptures in their heart language, and his linguistic and translation work with two Mixtec groups in Mexico. ✉ [john\\_williams@sil.org](mailto:john_williams@sil.org)

**ROBERT ('93/'17) & ANITA (WOODS) ('92) SULLIVAN** are teaching at Ambassador International University, Chongwe, Zambia, serving with Gospelink. ✉ [sullivanministry@gmail.com](mailto:sullivanministry@gmail.com)



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**PETER CANNIZZARO ('94)** is celebrating five years as director of SoulQuest Counseling Services. He has been married to his wife **ELLEN (VAN BUREN) ('94)** for 36 years.  
✉ [pcannizzaro@gmail.com](mailto:pcannizzaro@gmail.com)

**11 GREGG FISCHER ('94)** is in his 31st year at Turning Point (the church he grew up in) serving as the children's and senior adults pastor. He and his wife, Heather, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary in November of 2023. They have three children; Faith, Graham, and Hope.  
✉ [Gregg@TPCalvary.com](mailto:Gregg@TPCalvary.com)

**MICHELLE (ROUSE) FOX ('95)** published "This Day Journal," that fosters the habit of self-reflection and personal growth. She is the founder of Foxygen Consulting.  
✉ [michellefox9404@yahoo.com](mailto:michellefox9404@yahoo.com)

**JIM ('95) & JILL HESSON** have lived in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex since 2007. Jim serves with a Christian financial planning team.  
✉ [jhesson1@gmail.com](mailto:jhesson1@gmail.com)

**12 MIKE ('95) & KATHI MAGGARD** serve with Strategic Impact International encouraging and equipping disciple-multiplying leaders in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia. Mike wrote his first book "Inside Out: How Character Shapes Competency."  
✉ [mikeandkathi@generalmail.com](mailto:mikeandkathi@generalmail.com)

**13 SCOTT JOHNSON ('01)** serves as the NextGen pastor at Wedgefield Baptist Church in Wedgefield, South Carolina. In addition to pastoring, he teaches computer science and is a chaplain at Wedgefield University, a private school and daycare.  
✉ [scott4youth1975@gmail.com](mailto:scott4youth1975@gmail.com)



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**14 J ('02) & KAREN (MASSEY) ('00) SPURLING** have served as a pastoral couple in Florida, New York and Paraguay, South America. They also ministered in the Spiritual Formation and Residence Life departments at Nyack and Houghton Colleges. For the past seven years they have been serving with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Honolulu.  
✉ [pastorj@kapahulubible.org](mailto:pastorj@kapahulubible.org)

**ERIN (BRANCH) FREDERICKSON ('06)** is the supplemental learning coordinator at Kettering University in Flint, Michigan. She previously worked as the ESL program director. She lives in a 100-year-old farmhouse in Imlay City, Michigan that she has fully renovated with her husband of 14 years, Donald. They have two children: Elliana and Ezekiel.  
✉ [erinworldtraveler@hotmail.com](mailto:erinworldtraveler@hotmail.com)

**15 LEXI MCNAIR ('05/'14)** is a long-term missionary to Dresden, Germany with The Evangelical Alliance Mission. She works with a church planting team in the former East Germany to expand God's kingdom through youth ministry.  
✉ [Lexi.mcnair@team.org](mailto:Lexi.mcnair@team.org)

**16 WILLIAM GALL ('07)** served as a houseparent and advisor for Friendship Community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania for 31 years. It is a faith-based ministry cultivating capabilities of individuals with intellectual disability and autism.  
✉ [rdrfrm@gmail.com](mailto:rdrfrm@gmail.com)

**17 MICHAEL & JULIE (BIXLER) BECKER ('10/'14)** are thankful for how God is growing their family with the blessings of Isaiah Peace and Lydia Joy. They are waiting on God's perfect timing as they prepare to serve overseas in South Asia.  
✉ [julia.becker21@protonmail.com](mailto:julia.becker21@protonmail.com)

**18 JERRY ('13) & CARRIE JOHNSON** Jerry retired from the United States Army as a chaplain in May 2024. He is now a chaplain for Christus Health Santa Rosa District in the San Antonio, Texas area. Jerry has been a mentor for CIU's online Doctor of Ministry program since 2020.  
✉ [chapjj@gmail.com](mailto:chapjj@gmail.com)

**19 TIM & APRIL (BATSON) BRIEN ('15)** They adopted Sam while enrolled at CIU and had a hard but fulfilling journey in raising a child with medical complexity. Because Tim has Parkinson's disease, he also has some medical challenges.  
✉ [aprilbrien01@gmail.com](mailto:aprilbrien01@gmail.com)

**20 JOSH & LAUREL (DORMAN) ('15) PASKAUSKAS** welcomed Beckett Douglas into their family on June 11, 2024. Proud grandparents are **DOUG ('86) & JOAN ('86) DORMAN**.  
✉ [Laurel.dorman@gmail.com](mailto:Laurel.dorman@gmail.com)

**NICK & FRANCES (PAXTON) ('15) NEVEUX** along with Charles and Thomas, welcomed Andrew Cornelius on June 16, 2024. Proud grandparents are **JASON ('91) & LAURA ('91) PAXTON**.



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**21 MEHARI ('16) & NAZRAWIT KORCHO**, along with big sister Elroi, welcomed Efrata into their family in April 2024.  
✉ [meharikorcho@oci.org](mailto:meharikorcho@oci.org)

**22 SUSAN FORD ('22)** After earning her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from CIU at age 72, Susan retired from her full-time administrative and teaching role. Her career spanned almost 50 years in Christian education.  
✉ [susanmford@gmail.com](mailto:susanmford@gmail.com)

**23 CHERY (FLORES) KLINGSMITH ('23)** assists Missions Door missionaries who are planting churches, sharing the gospel with university students and ministering to marginalized men, women and children. She thanks God for the surprising gift of marrying Dr. Scott Klingsmith on Sept. 11, 2021.  
✉ [chery.flores.klingsmith@gmail.com](mailto:chery.flores.klingsmith@gmail.com)



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**24 JODI OPPENHUIZEN ('99/'24)** has been serving in the Czech Republic since 1999. She is the director of the Christian International School of Prague. She earned a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership from CIU in May.  
✉ [director@cisprague.org](mailto:director@cisprague.org)

**25 KEVIN (STUDENT/FORMER STAFF) & ANNE MCKINNEY** welcomed Samuel Allen to their family in April 2024. Kevin works for Clemson University as IT manager.  
✉ [kevinmckinney@gmail.com](mailto:kevinmckinney@gmail.com)

**JEREMY ('15) & HALEY REASONER** welcomed Oliver Archer into their family in July 2024. Jeremy is a performer at Dollywood, Tennessee.  
✉ [jreasoner11@gmail.com](mailto:jreasoner11@gmail.com)



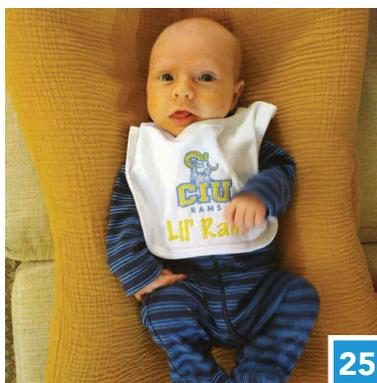
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## IN MEMORIAM

- CAROLYN ORR ('47) – August 2024
- PATRICIA KNIGHT HARGRAVE ('48) – May 2024
- MARY LEE FRY WALKER ('51) – July 2024
- EDWARD LOCHSTAMPFOR ('52) – March 2024
- PAUL SHOOK ('52) – February 2024
- F. MERLE DYE ('53/'83) – August 2024
- JACK SHARPE ('53) – August 2023
- LAVONNA SABIN CAREY ('54) – July 2023
- FRANCES MACNEILL ('54) – April 2024
- JANE SUDDUTH ('54) – April 2024
- DOROTHY MCCLAMROCK BOGER ('55) – Nov. 2023
- WILLIAM "BILL" DAVIDSON ('55) – March 2024
- JULIAN MYRA ('55) – December 2023
- JAMES CROWELL ('57) – June 2024
- JUNE STEWART DELNAY ('57) – February 2024
- ROBERT "BOB" TRIPP ('57) – August 2024
- JAMES VERCOUTEREN ('57) – March 2024
- PHYLLIS BROWN WOODWARD ('57) – March 2024
- LYMAN "LEFTY" REED ('58) – April 2024
- BARBARA BLAIR ROMAINE ('59) – February 2024
- DOROTHY "DORRIE" KNEFF CAGLEY ('60) – March 2024
- GRACE HUTCHINS GARFIELD ('60) – February 2023
- FRED VENABLE ('61) – September 2024
- PAULINE FRAMBACH ('62) – March 2024
- HELEN CLARK GOODWIN ('62) – July 2024
- DAVID HILLIS ('65) – April 2024
- ELLA FOWLER LYERLY ('66) – February 2024
- MARLOU JOYNER POTEAT ('66) – May 2024
- JANET LIDLE ('67) – January 2024
- KATHLEEN SULLIVAN PAPPAS ('68) – August 2024
- JOYCE SULLIVAN WESTERVELT ('69) – March 2024
- LYNN STEVENSON GROSSKOPF ('69) – July 2024
- JEFFREY PHILBROOK ('72) – January 2024
- CLAUD HERLOCKER ('74) – April 2024
- RONALD SPAULDING ('74) – June 2024
- SUSAN GRAHAM CASE ('76) – April 2024
- KIM PAYNE ('76) – April 2024
- DAVID HITZING ('77) – October 2023
- ANGUS MCINTOSH ('77) – August 2024
- HENRY "GIL" BAKER ('78) – April 2024
- CHERYL WILSON ('79) – February 2024
- GEORGE ANDERSON ('84) – December 2023
- MILTON "MILT" HINES ('86) – June 2024
- LINDA SMITHSON ('87) – March 2024
- CHRISTINE MARTIN JANZEN ('88) – April 2024
- ERIK LYTIKAINEN ('97) – February 2024
- MINH HA NGUYEN ('97) – July 2024
- AMANDA DEEANN HENRY ('99) – July 2024
- JAMES WEISS ('02) – June 2024
- NANCY MILLER ('10) – April 2024
- BRITTANY SURFACE ('19) – July 2024
- STANLEY BRUCKER ('21) – March 2024
- BETHANY LEAKE ('21) – July 2024



The *Kneeshaw family* on Move-In Day

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