

# The Christian Courier

Published by the Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship

*"The Literary Voice of the National Lectureship"*

[www.churchesofchristnationalleagueship.org](http://www.churchesofchristnationalleagueship.org)

## Churches of Christ 70th Annual National Lectureship – Atlanta, Georgia



The 70th Annual Churches of Christ National Lectureship will convene in the city of Atlanta, Georgia, during the dates of April 12-17, 2014. This celebrated event hosted by the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Decatur, Georgia, along with the West End Church of Christ in Atlanta, Georgia, has promised to provide attendees a life-changing experience.

Some of the most renowned and influential preachers from across our great brotherhood will address the selected Lectureship theme entitled: "Navigating Uncharted Waters." Workshop sessions will feature outstanding speakers who will examine critical issues facing the New Testament Church in the challenging waters of a changing world. Other activities will include the Annual Lectureship Banquet and a Ladies Luncheon that will acknowledge audacious Christian women

who are making a significant difference in their congregations and in their communities.

This Lectureship will undoubtedly be a groundbreaking venture as we embrace the truth of the sacred Word that our society has shifted from dramatically. Needless to say, the visible kingdom of Jesus Christ is now traveling in uncharted waters where we must navigate expertly and recover both our mission and commission as New Testament believers.

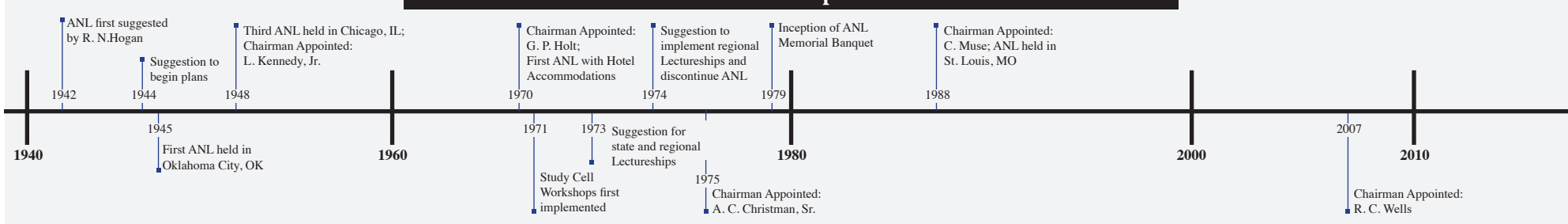
Therefore, it is with much anticipation that we invite you to lower your anchor in the city of Atlanta, Georgia, April 12-17, 2014. We assure you that at the end of the Lectureship you will be well equipped to navigate the uncharted waters we are presently facing as local congregations and individual members of the body of Jesus Christ.



**Dr. R. C. Wells**  
Advisory Committee Chairman  
Churches of Christ  
Annual National Lectureship



### Annual National Lectureship Historical Timeline



**"One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism"**



# Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship “Special Editorial”

In his acceptance speech at the 1960 Democratic National Convention held in Los Angeles, California, presidential candidate John F. Kennedy embraced the idiom of what he called a “New Frontier.”

This expression was meant to inspire Americans throughout the country to support his objectives for sustaining and securing the legacy of our great nation. Those who were present at this historical occasion listened attentively as Kennedy articulated: “We stand today on the edge of a New Frontier... the frontier of unknown opportunities... unsolved problems [and] unanswered questions...” Kennedy further stated that “...courage – not complacency – is our need today and the only valid test of leadership is the ability to lead and lead vigorously...”

The Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship is the oldest National event held among African American congregations in our brotherhood. However, the dynamics of the Lectureship has changed dramatically since its inception in the year 1945. The fundamental purpose has *not* changed, but the mindsets of our attendees including many of our preachers have modulated and become

diversified. With an increased amount of state and local Lectureships occurring throughout various regions of our brotherhood, in addition to other fellowship gatherings and influences attracting the attention of many, the Annual National Lectureship is currently confronted with the task of establishing a “New Frontier.”

The heralded legacy of the National Lectureship bequeathed to this era by men such as G. P. Bowser, R. N. Hogan, J. S. Winston, G. E. Steward, and Levi Kennedy, Jr., must never die. The untold sacrifices made by men in the likes of Nokomis Yeldell, G. P. Holt, Clyde Muse, Carroll Pitts, and Humphrey Foutz, must be forever crystallized and kept afresh. The unabridged commitment to the National Lectureship as exemplified by stalwarts such as W. F. Washington, R. C. Wells, Jack Evans, Sr., and Eugene Lawton, must continue to be personified in the hearts and minds of this present generation and those who will follow.

But the “New Frontier” of which Washington, Wells, Evans, and Lawton envision, is not a “new set of promises,” it is on the contrary a “new set of challenges.” The times that we live in today demands

new innovation, new imagination, and new creativity. Needless to say, the clarion call made by the present pioneers to this generation of gospel preachers is to “Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed.”

Furthermore, let it be said without fear of successful contradiction, that the viability, stability, and sustainability of the Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship will not be achieved by mere rhetoric. The National Lectureship *can* and *will* maintain its presence as the centerpiece of our brotherhood only if we have faith in the future and faith in ourselves.

In a concerted effort to embrace the “New Frontier” at a critical turning-point in National Lectureship history, the real question becomes “Do we have the determination to succeed?” In spite of the wide range of alternatives and other choices presented to our faithful constituents, the Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship must adopt the ideology to persevere. As we face the coming challenges with courage, we must wait upon the Lord, and ask that He renew our strength. Then shall we be equal

to the test. Then we shall not be weary, and then we shall prevail. The prophetic pronouncement is accurate and the message must be clearly understood... “Armed with the knowledge of our past we can with confidence charter a course for our future.”

With this in mind and in accordance to the Lectureship guidelines and policy, Dr. R. C. Wells, Chairman of the National Lectureship Advisory Committee has approved the selection of four new members to the Executive Committee to compliment its infrastructure. These men include Dr. Harvey M. Jackson of Mound Bayou, Mississippi, Dr. Richard L. Barclay of Decatur, Georgia, Dr. David C. Penn of Chicago, Illinois, and Evangelist Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr., of Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Along with superb ministerial experience, these men bring to the National Lectureship Executive Committee a vast amount of organizational and administrative skills. Additional information regarding these gifted leaders can be found below:



**Harvey M. Jackson, Ph.D.**

**D**r. Harvey M. Jackson is the Senior Minister of the Lampton Street Church of Christ in Mound Bayou, Mississippi, where he has served with distinction for the past 46 years. Dr. Jackson has received a Master of Education in Counseling and Psychology, Doctorate in Theology, Educational Specialist Degree in Counseling and Psychology, and a Ph.D., in Psychology. He currently serves as Assistant Professor of Psychology in the College of Education at Mississippi Valley State University.

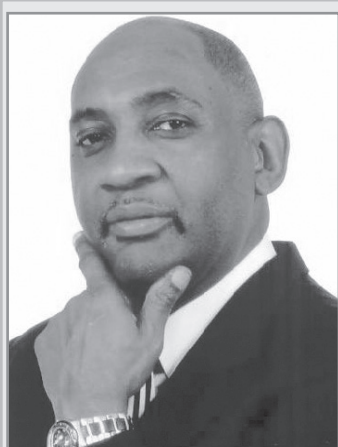
Dr. Jackson has served as a middle and secondary school instructor in Cleveland and Coahoma County, Mississippi; Secondary Counselor in the Cleveland School District; Director of Mental Health Service; Assistant Director of Job Placement for ex-offenders at the Mississippi Department of Corrections; and Director of Upward Bound Programs at Mississippi Valley State University.



**Dr. Richard L. Barclay**

**D**r. Richard L. Barclay is the Senior Minister of the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Decatur, Georgia. This Texas-born Evangelist is indeed a man of many talents. He is a Bible scholar, journalist, editor, teacher, lecturer, preacher, and dedicated church builder. Dr. Barclay has received a Bachelor of Arts with a major in Sociology and a minor in Religion. He has also received a Master of Arts from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and a Master of Theology from California Graduate School of Theology.

His profound devotion to an in-depth examination of the Scriptures is the driving force behind his Bible teaching. The soul searching and provocative sermons of Dr. Barclay have been carried through journals, broadcasts, lectureships and evangelistic meetings of many kinds. He is innovative in his presentations, using the latest technology to carefully and clearly convey the messages of the Lord.



**David C. Penn, Ph.D.**  
**Executive Committee**  
**Vice-Chairman**

**D**r. David C. Penn is the Senior Minister of the Robbins Church of Christ in Robbins, Illinois, where he has served with distinction for the past 30 years. Dr. Penn is a former student of Nashville Christian Institute under the tutelage of Marshall Keeble. He has received a Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, Master of Arts in Educational Administration, Master of Religious Education, Master of Arts in History, Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Administration (K-12), Doctorate in Education, Ph.D. in Christian Studies with a concentration in Systematic Theology, Ph.D. in Clinical Pastoral Counseling, and a Superintendent Certificate from Abilene Christian University.

Dr. Penn is licensed in the states of Illinois and Tennessee as a Social Science educator and administrator. He is a Professor of Education at Westwood College; Professor of History at Southwestern Christian College (online); Academic Dean for the School of Religious Studies in Little Rock, Arkansas; and a middle school Vice-Principal. Dr. Penn has served as a secondary and middle school instructor in the Chicago Public Schools and School District 152.5.



**Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr.**

**E**vangelist Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr. is the son of a gospel preacher, Jefferson R. Caruthers, Sr. He has received an Associate of Arts, Bachelor of Arts, Master of Theology, and a Master of Education. In addition, he has engaged in doctoral studies in Southern Religious History at the University of Mississippi. Jeff Caruthers, Jr., has spoken on various subjects including “The History of Restoration Leaders” at several college lectureships. He has spoken on numerous state and regional lectureships, youth meetings and gospel meetings.

Minister Caruthers is the author of several tracts as well as workbooks on both the Old and New Testament. He has written Bible School material for the 21st Century Christian series entitled “Blueprints.” Currently he serves on the Board for the National Teachers’ Workshop; the Executive Board of Quality Education Academy; Board of Directors for the Southeastern Youth for Christ Conference; Board of Directors for Quality Independent Living; and a faculty member for the School of Religious Studies in Little Rock, Arkansas. Furthermore, Jefferson R. Caruthers, Jr., is a featured annual facilitator at the Ministers’ Institute Conference in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

# “Remembering Nelson Mandela”

## An International Icon and South Africa’s Greatest Son

W. F. Washington, Ph.D.



**W. F. Washington, Ph.D.**  
Executive Committee Chairman  
Churches of Christ  
Annual National Lectureship

Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s iconic former President whose lifelong struggle against apartheid helped break the country’s system of racial discrimination, died on December 5, 2013, at the age of 95. Mandela was born July 18, 1918, in the small village of Mvezo to a tribal chief and adviser named Gadla Henry Mphakanyiswa. He was raised by the chief of the Tembu tribe after his father died when Mandela was still a child. Mandela eventually came to be known affectionately in South Africa by his Xhosa tribal name, Madiba.

He was educated at a Christian school

where he was given the English name “Nelson” and later went to college where he first became politically active. He also earned a law degree from the University of South Africa in Pretoria.

Perhaps even more than his improbable path from South Africa’s most-wanted man to its first democratically elected President (not to mention the first member of the country’s black majority to hold such an office), it was Mandela’s public composure and grace in the face of injustice that elevated him to a pantheon of civil rights heroes.

As a young attorney and leader of the African National Congress’s Youth Wing (an anti-apartheid activist group), Mandela challenged the white establishment with walk-outs, protests and marches that displayed the frustrations simmering throughout the country’s impoverished townships.

When the government responded by strengthening its grip, Mandela and his fellow activists pushed even harder; enduring beatings and jail time for their defiance. As the government continued with its brutality, killing 69 unarmed protesters in the Johannesburg suburb of Sharpeville in 1960, Mandela began to apply sociopolitical pressure with a series of attacks on state-owned property.

For that, he was convicted of treason and sent to prison for 27 years at Robben Island, the Alcatraz of South Africa. Before he would vanish behind bars, he gave a stirring speech on the “ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities”—an ideal for which he said he was prepared to die.

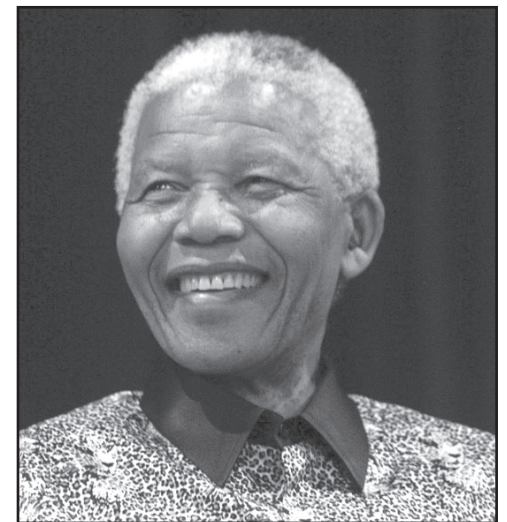
Nearly three decades later, he walked out of prison at 71 years old, with a head of gray

hair and his fist pumped skyward. Unbroken by years of hard labor, he soon embarked on an international tour urging supporters to continue their sanctions against the South African government. From the U.S. to Japan to the U.K., Mandela was received with euphoria, drawing throngs of banner-waving supporters. In 1993 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for “laying the foundations for a new democratic South Africa.”

Mandela, as a leader of the ANC, was also faced with the domestic challenge of negotiating a path to peace in a country that was arguably more polarized than ever before. Working with the government and other opposing political factions, he helped lay the groundwork for the country’s first democratic presidential election, which he won in 1994 with more than 60 percent of the vote. In his victory address, he said it was time to “heal the old wounds and build a new South Africa.”

President Barack Obama gave an emotional speech regarding the death of Mandela, saying “We’ve lost one of the most influential, courageous and profoundly good human beings that any of us will share time with on this earth. He no longer belongs to us, he belongs to the ages. His journey from a prisoner to a president embodied the promise that human beings and countries can change for the better. The fact that he did it all with grace and good humor and an ability to acknowledge his own imperfections only makes the man that much more remarkable.”

In her latest poem entitled *His Day is Done* composed in remembrance of Nelson Mandela, Pulitzer Prize nominee Dr. Maya Angelou mourns his death. However, she praises him as a modern-day David who slew a mighty Goliath and a Gideon who freed the



**Nelson “Madiba” Mandela**  
First Black President of  
South Africa

South African people. She also marvels at his endurance of racism and imprisonment.

With this in mind, the Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship along with the Ministers’ Institute Conference, we cherish the memory of Nelson “Madiba” Mandela. He was truly a “Living Legend” and one of the most globally respected “Freedom Fighters” of our era.

W. F. W.

*Please review a primary source document written by Dr. W. F. Washington to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 13, 1967. This letter has been preserved by The King Center Digital Archives Collection ([www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-w-f-washington-mlk](http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-w-f-washington-mlk)).*



**Chris Turner**  
Burlington, New Jersey  
Lectureship Song Director

## Churches of Christ Annual National Lectureship Selects Chris Turner as Lectureship Song Leader

Minister Chris Turner of Burlington, New Jersey, was recently chosen as the National Lectureship song leader and director based upon a unanimous recommendation by the Lectureship Executive Committee. Needless to say, Brother Turner has been blessed with the God-given ability to successfully lead a mass gathering of Christians in spiritual songs and praises unto the Lord.

Chris Turner is a native of Florence, Alabama, who at one time performed with the renowned “Southside Singers” of Rogersville, Alabama. He has been preaching the gospel for over fifteen years; having served as Youth Minister for the Southside Church of Christ in Durham, North Carolina, for seven years. Turner

currently serves as pulpit Minister for the Sunset Road Church of Christ in Burlington, New Jersey, where he has labored since 2011.

Brother Turner is recognized across the nation as one of the premiere vocalists in the Church of Christ. He has arranged and produced several CDs and cassettes; two of which include “In the Fullness of Time” and “Dreamin’.” According to Chris Turner “You will find some of the most beautiful voices and harmonies in the Church of Christ.”

For more detailed information regarding the musical gifts of Chris Turner please visit: Shalonda, Inc. at [www.shalondainc.com](http://www.shalondainc.com).



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

## Recent Advisory Committee Recommendations

**Samuell Pounds**  
Winter Haven, FL

**Willie Rupert**  
Baltimore, MD

**Dr. Lovell C. Hayes**  
Jackson, TN

**Conley Gibbs, Jr.**  
St. Louis, MO

**DonBurnell Holly**  
Memphis, TN

**Kenneth E. Fleming**  
Louisville, KY

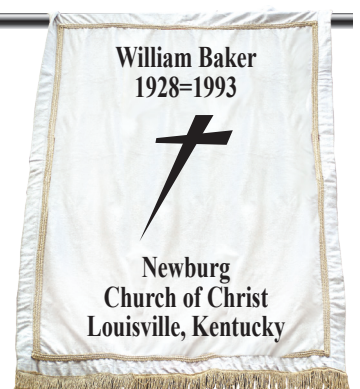
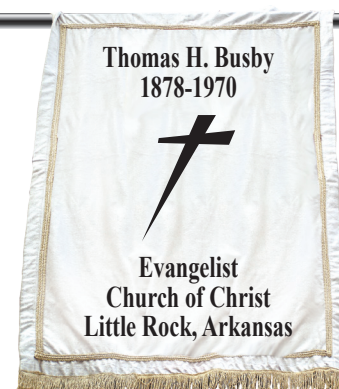
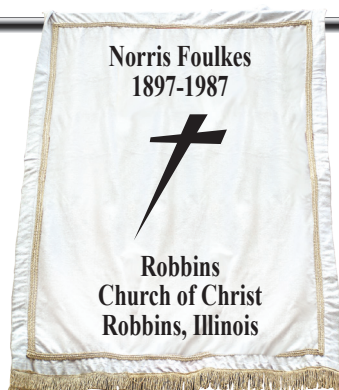


# “And How Shall They Hear Without A Preacher?”



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”

# “And How Shall They Hear Without A Preacher?”



“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”



*38th Annual Ministers' Institute Conference*

*January 19-23, 2014*

*Theme: "The Case for Grace"*



The 38th Annual Ministers' Institute Conference will convene during the dates of January 19-23, 2013, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It is here that young aspiring preachers are afforded an opportunity to speak before a national audience, commiserate and share spiritual fellowship with one another in a relaxed atmosphere of love. Let it be understood with crystal clarity that the MIC provides a unique forum for biblical interpretation where the sacred Word of God is emphasized, exposed, and explained as it is revealed in the Scripture.

The theme for the MIC this year is "The Case for Grace" taken from Ephesians 2:1-10 and Titus 2:11-14. Most of us understand that a theological definition of grace has reference to "unmerited favor." The study of grace holistically is one of the most liberating doctrines of the New Testament. However, is there a distinction between grace of God and the mercy of God? Are we saved by grace alone or faith alone or both? What role does the Holy Spirit have in the beneficent operation of grace? How is grace illustrated in the written Word and how is grace demonstrated by the Living Word? In addition, what impact if any, does the provision of grace have on the non-believer? These and many other questions will be carefully examined during the 2014 Ministers' Institute Conference as it pertains to the imperative matter of "grace."

Furthermore, insight will be presented in sermon and workshop formats by men of God who possess the ability to unpack the truth of God's will during the evening vesper services and daily workshop sessions. We encourage you to register at [www.ministerinstituteconference.com](http://www.ministerinstituteconference.com) so you can be a part of this great "koinonia" January 19-23, 2014. If you prefer to register by mail, please forward your registration to:

**Ministers' Institute Conference**  
**P.O. Box 5488**  
**Fort Lauderdale, FL 33310**

The cost of MIC registration is \$160.00. Hotel room and suite rates can be found on the Conference website. The deadline date for both registrations is December 30, 2013. For further information, please call (954) 735-2907, (954) 733-3385, or (954) 882-6710.

**Recent Deaths of Gospel Preachers in the African American Church of Christ**

<b>Adams, Leroy</b> Orlando, FL	<b>Davis, Maurice</b> Lakeland, FL	<b>Kennedy, James</b> Greenville, SC	<b>O'Bryant, Adgie</b> Greensboro, NC
<b>Adamson, Norman</b> Nashville, AK	<b>Dyson, O. J.</b> Santa Monica, CA	<b>Miller, Jim</b> Kalamazoo, MI	<b>Rowe, Gene</b> Texas City, TX
<b>Bryant, Donald</b> Hartford, CT	<b>Evans, Dr. Charles Sr.</b> Milwaukee, WI	<b>Moore, Matthew</b> Pompano Beach, FL	<b>Sankey, David</b> Chicago, IL
<b>Coleman, George</b> Dyersburg, TN			

**Chicago Area Churches of Christ Salutes "Centenarian" Sister Mary Stewart**



**Sister Mary Stewart**

On Sunday, October 13, 2013, the Chicago area Churches of Christ were pleased to celebrate the one-hundredth birthday of Sister Mary Stewart with her being in attendance. Sister Mary Stewart the eldest of three children was born on October 4, 1913, in Memphis, Tennessee. She is the widow of the late Evangelist James H. Stewart a pioneer preacher in the Church of Christ for over forty-five (45) years. Mary Stewart received her formal education in Memphis, Tennessee, and currently resides in Chicago, Illinois. She is also the mother of one daughter (Eva) and the grandmother of one daughter (Sonia). In the year 1931, she married her husband James and in 1933 she accepted Christ as her Savior under the preaching influence of G. P. Bowser.

It has been documented that the name "Mary" describes a person with a deep inner desire to use their gifts in leadership and to have personal independence. They would rather focus on serving rather than being served and delegate the details to others. Such can be seen in the lives of Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and Mary Magdalene. Those who are familiar with "Mary Stewart" can attest to this description as being an accurate portrayal of her Christian character.

In matters relating to leadership, Mary Stewart took charge of her life serving God by giving of her time, her talents, and her treasures. As a child she would frequently and without recompense go into the homes of senior citizens to clean, comb their hair, and perform other important tasks. She voluntarily worked for Northeastern Christian College in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, providing furnishings for the dormitories, assisting staff and administrators, raising

funds to support the college, and on Sundays she would invite students into her home to feed them.

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*When asked what she attributes to her longevity, Sister Stewart replied, "Well, I love God and I love people. God was in the plan. He did it all... it was not me."*

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Sister Stewart also made aprons and sold them in an effort to raise funds for Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas. She and her husband once pawned their car for \$300.00 and donated the money to the college. She previously served as Chairlady for the Rainbow of States Banquets and raised additional funds to contribute toward SwCC. In 1977, this diligent and noble servant traveled to Jamaica, West Indies, to assist others and made repeated trips to West Africa in 1979, 1983, and 1985.

As it pertains to personal independence, Mary Stewart drove her own car to church to visit the sick, transport others and to run errands until she was ninety-five (95) years of age. She was then forced by her doctor to stop driving! The ultimate objective of Sister Mary Stewart is finding favor with Lord along with encouraging others. Without doubt, this "Mary" is a role model par excellence to the Churches of Christ in Chicago and throughout the nation. To this day, Mary Stewart is mentally alert and faithfully attends worship service each Sunday. Her life is indeed a testimony of the goodness and grace of God that is bestowed upon those who "trust in the Lord."

Finally, and in regard to delegating details, the abiding quote of Mary Stewart personifies her true Christian spirit: "I will pass this way but once. Whatever work I may do, let me do it now." Her favorite chapter in the Bible is Psalm 90, which teaches us to number our days. When asked what she attributes to her longevity, Sister Stewart replied, "Well, I love God and I love people. God was in the plan. He did it all... it was not me." In a demonstration of love towards this great soldier of the cross, the Chicago area congregations raised one-thousand (\$1,000.00) dollars as an honorarium on behalf of Sister Mary Stewart. Proclamations were also sent from Dr. Jack Evans, President of Southwestern Christian College, the Honorable Rahm Emmanuel, Mayor of Chicago, Illinois, and the Honorable Pat Quinn, Governor of the state of Illinois.

# “We Must Address the Distress Which Lies Before Us”

“Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in...” (Nehemiah 2:17)

## National Appeal on Behalf of Southwestern Christian College

In the December 2013 edition of the Christian Chronicle newspaper, it was reported that Southwestern Christian College in Terrell, Texas, is facing a tremendous financial crisis which threatens to discontinue its existence. The sudden loss of \$500,000 a year in federal funding has crippled the recruiting capabilities and seriously endangered several vital operational needs. Throughout the years this historically Black college has faced one challenge after another in its efforts to serve students from all walks of life. Just five and a half years ago, Southwestern suffered a devastating fire that cost an estimated \$1.8 million in structure and content losses.

Originally known as the Southern Bible Institute in Fort Worth, Texas, the college moved to Terrell, Texas, in 1949 having acquired its present property which housed the Texas Military Institute. However, the unparalleled legacy of Southwestern Christian College can be traced back to the year 1902. Pioneer preachers such as G. P. Bowser the “Father of Christian Education” among African Americans in the Church of Christ, R. N. Hogan, J. S. Winston, G.

E. Steward, and Levi Kennedy, Jr., each embraced a vision of equipping the saints in the Lord’s visible kingdom through the medium of higher education. Men today such as President Jack Evans, Sr., and Vice-President James O. Maxwell, have sacrificed their lives and entire well-being in order to make Christian education possible for countless numbers of young people.

Let it be understood with clarity that Southwestern Christian College is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); one of the six regional accreditation bodies recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Southwestern is also a member in good standing of the Association of Texas Colleges and Universities. The curriculum of Southwestern offers an Associate of Arts degree along with a four-year bachelor’s degree in Religious Education and Bible. Online courses are also available for students who cannot attend classes on campus.

According to Doug Foster, a Church

History professor at Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas, he lists four predominant entities upon which the African American Church of Christ has maintained its viability and recognition. Foster has stated.

*“Southwestern has provided one of the most powerful centers of identity in Black Churches of Christ – along with the Christian Echo newspaper, the National Lectureship and the National Youth Conference.”*

*Vol. 70, No. 12 December 2013*

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and the National Youth Conference.”

Because of decreasing enrollment and lack of financial support, Western Christian College and High School in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, was compelled to cease operations last year. The closing of Western Christian College came three years after the decision was made to close Cascade College in Portland, Oregon, another financially troubled Christian school. Churches of Christ in the Philadelphia area still express sorrow concerning the loss of Northeastern Christian Junior College in Villanova, Pennsylvania, which subsequently merged with Ohio Valley University in Vienna, West Virginia, in the mid-1990s.

With these facts in mind, it becomes necessary and vitally essential for the supporters of Southwestern to “address the distress” we are currently confronted with. Pray fervently! Pray faithfully! Pray fearlessly, and by all means help financially in this hour of great need and crisis.

## “The Transition of an Enemy to an Advocate”



**Don Burnell Holly**  
Memphis, Tennessee

The transition of Saul of Tarsus from an “Enemy of the Cross” to becoming an “Advocate for Christ” is an optimal example of one becoming a compelling comrade for Christianity. Saul of Tarsus transitioned his status not only as an “enemy,” but from being the “arch nemesis” of the Lord’s Church, to a staunch advocate and provocative preaching giant in the visible kingdom of God.

By racial identification Saul was a Hebrew born in the city of Tarsus and the country of Cilicia (Acts 21:39). By citizenship he was

a Roman and by religion he was a follower of Judaism. In the Philippian letter, he again identifies himself as being a member of the racial family tree of the Hebrews (Phil. 3:5). He notes that he was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” to stress the fact that he could prove his family lineage all the way back to Eber, the ancestor of Abraham (Gen. 11:16). Eber was the descendant of Shem from which the Hebrew nation thus derived (Gen. 10:21). Abraham himself was called a Hebrew in Genesis 14:13.

Saul was named after the first king of Israel and classifies himself as a Hebrew, an Israelite and of the “seed of Abraham” (II Cor. 11:22). The word “seed” in this text refers to “sperma” or male sperm. It is very obvious that he is referring to his literal racial bloodline. In his right to boast, he declares that he was “of the stock of Israel” (II Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5). By this he means that he was born of the earthly family of Jacob. The word “stock” in this passage has reference to “offspring or kindred.” He then narrows his ancestry to the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest son of Jacob (Phil. 3:5).

He goes on to say that he was a Pharisee as touching the Law (Phil. 3:5-6). Being a Pharisee was not a racial or biological designation, but a member of a religious sect. As a member of this religious sect he was very zealous, persecuting the body of Christ. As far as his righteousness was concerned, he was blameless in obedience in his law-keeping. When writing to the Church of Galatia, he recalls his “conversation in

time past in the Jews’ religion.” This word “conversation” denotes his membership and manner of life as a member of the religion of Judaism. He also stated that he “profited in the Jews’ religion” (Gal. 1:13-14). In other words, he excelled in his learning and zeal to obey above many of his contemporaries.

*But it was on a dusty Damascus road, while en route to perform a dirty duty, that this infamous enemy of Christ became an advocate for the Sovereign Savior.*

This man was an enlightened individual who was instructed at the feet of Dr. Gamaliel the most outstanding rabbi teacher of that time (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was one of the most honorable and reputable Jewish rabbis during the days of the Apostles (Acts 5:34). He was the grandson of Hillel, the founder of the most influential rabbinical school of Judaism. Gamaliel was also the president of the Sanhedrin in succession of his father.

It was in this environment that Saul received his education in the religion of Judaism and became well versed in its dogma and apologetics. At some point during his educational years, it was instilled in him a fervent hatred for Christ and His followers and therefore he became the perfect “enemy”

in the employment of the Sanhedrin against Christians. No doubt Saul made many trips throughout the Roman province, arresting and testifying against the followers of Christ. Saul was also the young man who held the coats of the Jewish mob who stoned to death Stephen, the first Christian martyr as Jesus stood at the right hand of God in heaven (Acts 7:54-60). Furthermore, it was Saul of Tarsus who made havoc of the Church of Christ, entering into every house and committing men and women to prison.

In Acts 9:1-2, Luke the historian is very clear to explain that Saul was yet practicing his anti-Christian work when he left Jerusalem under the authority of the High Priest. His purpose was to bring any person he found “of this way” back to the city of Jerusalem for prosecution.

Luke declares that Paul took the initiative to go to the High Priest and ask for authority to go to Damascus in Syria, which is located 130 miles from Jerusalem, for the sole purpose of arresting the followers of Christ. But it was on a dusty Damascus road, while en route to perform a dirty duty, that this infamous enemy of Christ became an advocate for the Sovereign Savior.

Brethren, we should be encouraged to view our current enemies of Christ as potential advocates for Christianity in view of Paul’s spiritual development and maturation. Let us be reminded that as the Omnipotent and Supreme Potter of all mankind, God can use anybody and everybody in proclaiming the soul saving gospel message.

**“One Lord... One Faith... One Baptism”**



*“There are nearly a million documents associated with the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Martin Luther King, Jr., Center for Nonviolent Social Change, has placed this priceless letter composed by Dr. W. F. Washington to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., into its national archives. Dr. Washington penned this letter in April 1967 during the zenith of the Vietnam War.”*

