Imagine being able to see the beautiful Eiffel Tower, the beaches of Bermuda, and the Serengeti all in one day! In 1873, Jules Verne wrote the adventure novel *Around the World in 80 Days*. During the 2013 Global Gathering, a visit to the Global Expo will take you around the world in just minutes!

The good news is that you don’t have to call a travel agent for this trip. You just have to be at the Global Gathering.

The Global Expo, hosted by Global Missions, will be presented in O. C. Lewis Gymnasium and is open daily during the Global Gathering. The Global Expo is your chance to visit Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Caribbean, Europe and the Middle East, Latin America, and North America all right here in Anderson, Indiana.

“The Global Expo is going to be something that the whole family will not want to miss,” says Bob Edwards, director of Global Ministry Group. “It will be colorful, interactive, and informative. Learn more about the regions of the world where the Church of God has a presence.”

In addition to the dynamic worship and preaching offered at the Global Gathering, the Global Expo offers a rich international experience for those who attend. Explore the world as you enter an African grass hut, see a wooden replica of Brazil’s *Christ the Redeemer* statue, walk on the beach, or visit an Asian pagoda. The Expo is the perfect place to fellowship with our international guests or enjoy songs performed by musicians featured on our world stage as you travel the globe with your family.

In the prayer garden, you can leave a message of praise or encouragement, take time to pray for concerns from our brothers and sisters serving Christ around the world, or simply pause for peaceful reflection.

Watch exciting firsthand accounts about how God is changing lives all over the globe in our G-MAX theater. Missionaries and nationals will be on the big screen, sharing stories from their ministries and introducing you to the people whose lives are being transformed by Christ through missions. You can see the fruits of your support as you meet those who are the hands and feet of Christ in global ministry.

In the center of it all will be the marketplace. Items from around the world will be available for you to see and purchase. Take a piece of your favorite part of the world home with you. What a great way to remember your experience at the Global Gathering!

The Global Expo is also an extension of...
Aloha! The True Story of Ministry in Paradise

By Carl Stagner

Gentle breezes, warm sunshine, swaying palm branches, and hundreds of miles of beaches typify the Hawaiian vacation. But ministry in Hawaii is anything but a vacation. In fact, the vacation atmosphere of Hawaii is at least one of the obstacles for evangelism and discipleship on these islands separated from the rest of the country by some 2,400 miles of ocean.

Korean, Japanese, Chinese, and more. Hawaii is a difficult place to win believers. We’re right next door to a Taoist temple and close to a Buddhist temple. There’s a lot of turnover, even though the church is in a stable neighborhood. And the economy is expensive—a modest house will run you $600,000.”

Residents don’t always stay long, especially those who are serving in the military. The topography of the region also inhibits the visibility of the Aina Haina Church of God. “The location is isolated, hard to find,” Barbara explains. “We have mountains all around us, and we’re up in a valley along winding streets.” As a result, the gospel has had to be brought to where the people are. Since the early days of ministry in Hawaii, innovative ways to reach the lost have been put into practice.

Brice and Nancy Casey were the first missionary pastors sent to Hawaii. Brice and his late wife enthusiastically embraced the Great Commission in 1968 when they began their assignment. “I was ministering in Hawaii during the Vietnam War,” Brice recounts. “There was a significant presence of military personnel. I started a midweek gathering for them in the Pearl Harbor area.” The Caseys brought the good news to the people; they did not wait for the people to come to them. According to Brice, in an article he wrote for Missions Magazine in January 1971, “Our home Bible studies have opened to us a unique means of ministry...it is challenging and also in tune with the New Testament pattern for evangelism.” Referring to the population in Hawaii that is very unfamiliar with Christianity, Casey wrote: “[It] demands that the church move out beyond the four walls and go to the people.”

Casey recalls the difficulties of doing the work of the Lord in a place where the gospel of Jesus Christ is foreign. “Hawaii is perceived as a paradise. But I found it a real challenge to minister in a recreational environment. People

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Youth leading worship at Aina Haina Church of God

Aina Haina Church of God

While Pastors Tim and Josie Vickey are on special missionary assignment to Malawi, Bob and Barbara Christensen have offered interim services for a few months. They will tell you that ministry in Hawaii isn’t exactly living a pastor’s dream. “Well, it’s easy to agree that this is a beautiful place to live, but it’s a difficult place for the church,” Bob explains. “It’s a very international population—

We invite you to wonder, explore, to see for yourself – call today!

Opportunity.

CHOGnews | 2 | June 2013
Grace in Guyana: Grannum Grateful for Global Missions

By Carl Stagner

Because of his commitment to the Lord, his family threw him out of the house at age fourteen. His school books were tossed out the door, and the injunction to go live at the church echoed harshly in his ears. He remembered the words of Psalm 27:10, “For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in” (ESV). So even as the young believer collected his belongings in a pillow case and set off into the unknown, a song eased the pain: “Whether I live or die, whether I wake or sleep, I am the Lord’s, I know.”

Milton Grannum grew up in Guyana, which was British Guiana at the time. Grannum is the man he is today because of the work of Church of God missions. As a Roman Catholic schoolboy, Grannum’s curiosity led him to attend the first vacation Bible school ever to be held in the country. The leaders were Herman and Lavera Smith, Church of God missionaries to Guyana. Grannum was intrigued by the message of the Church of God and won over by the love of the missionaries. Before long, Grannum was leading a group of peers to minister on the streets, in hospitals, and in nursing homes between the Sunday morning and evening services. But this newfound faith and commitment to the Church of God did not go over well with his parents, or his instructors.

“My family was Roman Catholic,” Grannum recounts. “On Sundays, no one saw me from morning until night because the Lord was my passion. The priests at the Roman Catholic school put a lot of pressure on my parents because I was so active in a non-Catholic church. In Roman Catholic doctrine, to even enter a non-Catholic church in those days was considered a sin. Not only that, but the culture in the country was such that in order for you to get a good job as an adult, you had to be a part of the one of the big churches—the Roman Catholics, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, or the Church of England. The Church of God was considered a non-entity in terms of status and significance. We didn’t have Church of God leaders positioned in different companies that would open doors for a young Church of God person like me. Everything hung on who you knew.” But everything did hang on who young Grannum knew, and his faith in the Lord allowed everything to work out for the good.

When circumstances seemed at their bleakest, Church of God missionaries brought hope to Grannum. Once on the street, the youth found his way to the home of his Sunday school teacher, who connected him once again with Herman and Lavera Smith. After Grannum had stayed with the Smiths for several weeks, Herman Smith found a house for Grannum and paid the rent out of his own pocket. “Every Saturday I went to Herman’s house to do whatever work needed to be done, to cut the grass, bathe the dog, wash the car…it was my tithe,” Grannum recalls. “After I finished working there every Saturday, they would give me a glass of milk and a sandwich and I would go home to the place I was staying. I had no money, but I knew my service should go to him.” At the conclusion of the Smiths’ service in Guyana, they arranged with the new missionaries to provide Grannum with lodging until he was eighteen, when he would be ready to leave for Bible college in Trinidad.

“When we invest in missions, we are making it possible for God to manifest himself through the instruments he is using in those countries. We don’t know the harvest, but we participate in the ‘seed time.’” Perhaps it’s this sentiment of Grannum’s that overwhelms him with anticipation for the Global Gathering. For the past two years, he has served on its program committee. “I’m looking forward to a clarification of vision, the cementing of powerful relationships, and for persons to capture a vision of the united church.” To register for the Global Gathering (June 22–25 in Anderson, Indiana), visit www.chog.org/globalgathering.

Reflecting back to that first VBS experience, Grannum says, “The second day I was there, we were doing arts and crafts. Smith asked me what I was doing. I told him I was finished doing my arts and crafts. He responded, ‘Well, if you’re finished, why don’t you become my helper?’ I don’t know what he had in mind, but what I heard was, ‘Here is a person I had just met the day before who had now invited me to be his helper. From that moment on, I saw myself as a helper. I had a purpose in life. I believed it, embraced it, and it gave me new vision for what I was to do.’”

Who would have guessed that a young boy in Guyana would have become the founding pastor of a large Church of God congregation in Philadelphia? Did Herman and Lavera Smith know what the fruit of their labor would be? Did Donald and Betty Jo Johnson and other missionaries who poured their all into children like Milton Grannum see the end result in advance? Did the churches that supported these missionaries know what the harvest would look like? No, but they were obedient to support and send workers into the fields. Thank God they did. Thank God they still do.
On the World Stage at the Global Gathering

By Bob Edwards

One of the really neat events that will happen at the Global Gathering, June 22–25, is what is being called the World Stage. Many of the international guests who are coming have been gifted by God with various talents. Global Missions wants you to experience music from different parts of the world and give the artists an opportunity to share their gifts with a wider audience.

The world stage will be located in the center of the O. C. Lewis Gym, where the Global Expo is going to take place. Global Missions will place an announcement board near the stage that will give visitors the times of the performances. You will want to listen to all of these artists.

Artists will provide twenty to thirty minutes of praise through song from their part of the world on the World Stage! Please join us for these guest artists as they minister to us:

- Saturday, June 22, at 1:00 pm—Alson Ebanks, from Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands
- Sunday, June 23, at 1:00 pm—Sharon and Paul Roberts, from Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands
- Monday, June 24, at 1:00 pm—Jay Moussa, from Turkey
- Monday, June 24, at 6:00 pm—Obed Okech, from KIST, Kima, Kenya
- Tuesday, June 25, at 1:00 pm—Luciana Schulle from Brazil (now living in Indianapolis)
- Tuesday, June 25, at 6:00 pm—The Preacher and the Redhead from the United States (with Bryan Hughes from Global Missions!)

Ministry in Paradise

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come and go to Hawaii for pleasure. Even the people who live here naturally have somewhat of a recreational temperament.” This recreational mindset rears its head when matters of spiritual growth, discipleship, and commitment come into play.

The influence of Eastern religions also poses a challenge for ministry. Brice shares a story of visitors to the Church of God who were confused by the limited use of touch and imagery in the Christian worship. Brice also learned that the men were offended by the Christian concept of repentance. “These men felt like repentance showed weakness among their peers.” In spite of the challenges, the Caseys saw church growth, children’s ministry expansion, and helped oversee administrative and legal issues. To this day, the Vickeys continue to carry on the legacy of faithful ministry began several generations ago. The Aina Haina congregation has generously supported their work in Malawi too, even while ministry continues in Hawaii.

The Church of God beginnings in Hawaii date back to 1908 and a young Japanese minister who had picked up a copy of the Gospel Trumpet. In 1955, Curt and Carole Loewen, of Warner Pacific College (then Pacific Bible College), moved to Hawaii and met other Church of God people there. These families, along with military personnel stationed in Hawaii, formed the Aina Haina Church of God, first pastored by Carl Riley. Their first sanctuaries were a member’s home and a steakhouse. Among an exhaustive list of names representing individuals who have made an impact on the Church of God in Hawaii is the uncle of Church of God Ministries general director designate Jim Lyon. “My uncle Jack Taylor, and his wife, and my aunt, Madeline Taylor, traveled to Hawaii often and invested in the beginnings of the Church of God there.”

For more information about the history of the Church of God in Hawaii, order your copy of Into All the World from Warner Press at www.warnerpress.org, or call 800-741-7721.
The apostle Paul identifies his role in church growth in 1 Corinthians 3:6—"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" (nrsv). Since God causes the church to grow, how then can we do our best at planting and watering? Columbia Community Church in Richland, Washington, has tripled in attendance in the past four years. In a recent interview with Church of God Ministries, Pastor Mark Barker offered some insights into the practical steps the church took that ultimately led to God’s orchestrating extraordinary growth.

"Everything hinges on God, and we know that. But what did we do on our end?" Barker asks. "When I came in as the pastor here in 2009, we changed a lot of how the church is structured, like the leadership team. It was to the point that if the church needed more copy paper, the board had to approve it. But now it really has become a pastor-driven church—I’m not just talking about me, but I’m talking about the entire staff. The board holds me accountable."

The church also changed how they conduct board meetings. “Usually a board meeting has representatives of each area of ministry, but these representatives tend to fight for the area they represent. So instead we have what we call the ‘Board of 30,000 Feet.’ They help us to see the vision that the staff has cast and then to cast that vision to the congregation. When we get together, we rotate meeting in the homes of the board members. We first have dinner and devotions before we get into the meeting. So we get together as family and friends first, before we handle business.”

Barker insists that their focus on the unchurched isn’t just talk. “We in the church today say we want to win the lost, but I see that a lot of churches do ministry that is still really geared toward the Christians. The staff meets every Tuesday and asks what the next Sunday looks like through the eyes of a visitor. The song choices, the greeters, the parking lot—what does it look like to a non-Christian? And how did we do last week?”

“So even in our speaking, we want to make sure it makes sense. Though we’re not seeker driven, we are seeker sensitive. So we’ll do Communion, child dedications, baptisms, but we’ll make sure everyone understands what we’re doing before we do it. We explain what child dedication means, what the difference is between that and baptism. We take about three minutes to explain that to them. The average church attendee is tired probably of hearing this all time, but again, we’re not doing it for them.”

Barker explains that the leadership at Columbia Community Church of God implemented several other changes that contributed to a healthier functioning body, as well as to a more outreach-focused mission. They removed the pews, though not because there is anything inherently wrong with pews. The new chairs they purchased allow the worship facility to serve as a multipurpose center. To encourage young families to visit and stay at the church, they increased the size of the children’s ministry area by sacrificing the established offices of the church. Columbia Community Church also conducted a meticulous search of database software until they found Church Community Builder, which Barker reports is 95 percent of what they were looking for. The program allows them to effectively keep track of visitors, first-time givers, scheduling of baptisms, and much more. As a result, they have retained more visitors.

To handle the incredible growth, many churches would opt for relocation or the construction of a bigger building. But Barker had a different idea. Instead of new construction, the church remodeled two other large rooms on the church campus and now offer three worship services at the same time, each with a different worship style. A countdown clock in two of the venues allows worship leaders to time their services up to the point that the teaching begins; the teaching is projected onto large screens. It would have cost several million dollars for new construction, but it only cost $150,000 to offer multiple venues. Columbia Community Church of God is a growing multi-site church that meets at one location!

God continues to produce more and better disciples, not just a crowd. Last year at Colombia Community Church of God, 190 were baptized. On the weekend before Memorial Day this year, the church celebrated the baptism of more than thirty believers.
A decade after the initial idea was broached, the Church of God Interpretive Center will open in late spring 2013. Construction is now underway for the 2,200-square-foot facility, which will be housed in the Church of God Ministry Building in Anderson.

After Dr. Ron Duncan assumed the office of general director of Church of God Ministries in 2002, the Phoenix Triennial Visioning Conference charged him, among other tasks, with addressing the identity of the Church of God movement. Duncan assigned responsibility to Church of God Historian Merle Strege, who convened a group of the movement’s elder statesmen to consider the matter. They proposed the development of a Church of God Interpretive Center on a smaller scale similar to the Mennonite Mennohof in northern Indiana.

The center’s fundamental premise is summed up in this observation by the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue*: “I can only answer the question, ‘What am I to do?’ if I can answer the prior question, ‘Of what stories am I a part?’...Hence there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its original dramatic resources.” Applied to the church, MacIntyre’s point is that our sense of mission rises out of our identity, and we come to understand our identity by knowing our fundamental stories. We do not make up our own identity; we inherit it. But we are also free to interpret and extend that identity for our own time. The interpretive center’s intention is that visitors will experience some of the stories of the Church of God movement and leave with a sense of the movement’s mission in today’s world.

The plan of the center is structured around six displays, each highlighting a key element in the life of the Church of God. The six themes are: holiness, Christian unity, the Bible, missions and evangelism, the church (polity and membership), and healing/wholeness. Each display will make use of historical objects, photographs, video, quotations and narrative, but the center is not simply a museum. It is designed with the intention that visitors will catch something of the spirit and identity of the Church of God. That intention is in keeping with Dr. Duncan’s assignment to attend to the formation of a clearer sense of identity for the movement.

Arlo Newell, Robert Reardon, Gene Newberry, Harold Phillips, and T. Franklin Miller were the original consultants on the project. That committee determined the six major themes. A team of three individuals—Dr. Strege; Anderson University Professor Don Boggs, of Covenant Productions; and Anderson University Professor Brad McKinney—has been responsible for the overall design as well as displays. The center will open in time for the Church of God Global Gathering in June.

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Church Named Heritage Looks Forward to a Blessed Past

By Carl Stagner

At Heritage Church of God we try to be the church of your fondest memories.” These words greet the visitor to the online home of Heritage Church of God, a thriving congregation in Maumee, Ohio. Without proper context, this goal of the church may confuse some—especially peers in the ministry. But the words that follow offer insight into this portion of the church’s vision.

“[Heritage seeks to be] the church where you dedicated your life to Christ, where you were baptized, and where you met your best friends. We allow the Spirit of God to lead us into the good paths.” The church that Robert Fry pastors is reaching a niche of the culture that still longs for a truth that is not watered down and a family that is as genuine as it is active and alive. Heritage Church of God is a place where memories of the life-changing kind are made!

“It seems everyone has a church they remember that was the best of the best,” Fry explains, “and where the fellowship and friendship was wonderful. It was the place where you gave your life to the Lord, the place where you were baptized, the place where you were married and where you dedicated your children. The place where you play softball, golf, and prayed for and visited the sick.”

A mission statement, vision, and goals do not alone satisfy Heritage Church of God. This congregation is doing whatever it can to make their church the place where you were saved and sanctified. On Wednesday evenings, the church now serves a meal to meet a very practical need. “I saw that kids were eating McDonald’s as they walked in the door on Wednesday night,” Fry recalls. “I saw families arrive late because the mothers needed to cook something quickly before church. So I personally started

Thursday Church at Heritage Church of God cooking hot dogs and making KoolAid on Wednesday nights. Then one of our retired men asked if he could help; it was nothing fancy, but more and more men started helping; they wanted to do it right. I was doing less every week.”

Today the Wednesday evening dinner ministry is run by a proud group of guys who call themselves Men in the Kitchen. Each week during the season, these men prepare a meal for 130 guests.

Holding church services on days other than Sunday is becoming a popular outreach for people who have to miss church for work. Pastor Robert Fry had been dreaming of the chance to offer a midweek worship service for several years, but it had always been impractical. When a local radio station on which the church broadcast Fry’s sermons asked if they could air the program every day, at no extra cost to the church, a window of opportunity opened.

Thursday Church at Heritage offers the same format as Sunday morning but now reaches a new audience who is already familiar with Fry from the radio. “We are just in church on Thursday to do what we do on the radio, and that is to feed and evangelize our community. We average over eighty on Thursday.”

Fry adds that he believes the church’s Thursday worship attendance may ultimately surpass that of Sunday morning.

The gospel is clearly preached at Heritage Church of God. The doctrine of the reformation movement is emphasized. Making memories is celebrated. And the church is seeking every opportunity to fulfill the Great Commission.

2013 Global Gathering of the Church of God

If you missed the experience last year, mark your calendars today to join the Global Communion service this year on June 23. Attend the Global Gathering and celebrate Communion with thousands of congregations together in one place during Sunday evening’s worship service.

Watch it live on the Internet. Learn more at www.chog.org/gcs.

Global Communion Service

Sunday, June 23, 2013, 7:30 PM
Concert to Feature Patty, Gaithers, McLaughlin, and More AU Music Alumni

Anderson University alumna and renowned award-winning Christian recording artist Sandi Patty will host a special concert of several musically accomplished AU alumni on September 22 at 7:00 pm in the York Performance Hall on the Anderson University campus for the benefit of her alma mater. Patty will be among an amazing list of performers for a live performance featuring legendary gospel artists Bill and Gloria Gaither and pop rock singer-songwriter Jon McLaughlin. Also taking the stage will be Dove Award-winning Christian band Sidewalk Prophets, as well as Jeff Owen, lead guitarist of Tenth Avenue North. Dove Award-winning songwriter Christa Wells will join this impressive list of artists, as will singer-songwriters Ally and Anna Long of the Christian band Alanna Story. Tickets may be purchased through iTickets at www.itickets.com/events/305856.html.

“Anderson University has made a huge impact on my life for the good,” said Sandi Patty. “When the university asked me to be involved in this event, it got me thinking about all the stories and lives I know who have been influenced through AU. My parents both graduated from AU, and many of my children have had great experiences at AU. When I think about my own growth as a student—musically, intellectually, and spiritually—I can’t help but be overwhelmed with gratitude toward all the people that make AU what it is today.

Titled “Woven Threads,” the concert will bring together some of AU’s best-known alumni musical talent to support the university where each developed their talent and where each began their careers. This amazing collection of performers and artists will be supported by faculty musicians from the School of Music, Theatre, and Dance at Anderson University. “Woven Threads” will feature many familiar songs specifically selected by Patty herself and performed live through a unique acoustic setting. Music performed during the concert will be uniquely arranged and presented by each artist and featured on a special live recording by the same name for future release.

“When I was a student, I remember the music department being located down in the basement of Park Place Church of God,” added Patty. “I also remember seeing the current Fine Arts building constructed and finished, and what an amazing growth opportunity that became for students across the country to learn about music and God in that great facility. Now that I’ve seen the beautiful acoustic space that is the York Performance Hall, I am more excited than ever to perform at my alma mater with so many world-class musicians. Many of my friends who are changing lives through music will tell you the same thing. As I’ve talked with Bill and Gloria, Jon, Dave and Ben, Jeff, Christa, Ally and Anna about giving back to AU through this event, they’ve all said the same thing: Anderson University was life-changing and affirming to each of us in unique ways, and we are honored to perform in this beautiful new hall to honor God and this place.”

About Sandi Patty:
Sandi Patty has won forty Dove Awards, five Grammy Awards, and four Billboard Music Awards, and became a Gospel Music Hall of Fame inductee in 2004. Her albums have sold more than eleven million units, garnering her three platinum and five gold recordings. As the most-awarded female vocalist in contemporary Christian music history, her voice is still the gold standard by which all who follow are measured. For more information, visit www.sandipatty.com.

About Bill and Gloria Gaither:
Gospel music legends Bill and Gloria Gaither began their relationship with Anderson University as students. After
their college days, they launched successful careers in music ministry. The Gaithers have collaborated on hundreds of popular gospel songs, winning many Grammy Awards and Dove Awards from the Gospel Music Association (GMA). They have earned the title of the GMA’s “Songwriter of the Year” eight times. In 2000, Bill and Gloria were named “Songwriters of the Century” by ASCAP (American Society of Composers Authors, Publishers. For more information, visit www.gaither.com.

About Jon McLaughlin:
Jon McLaughlin has sold more than 170 thousand albums and more than oe million digital tracks. McLaughlin released his 2007 debut album Indiana, followed by OK Now in 2008. The albums yielded placements on the TV series Scrubs and movies including Georgia Rule and Bridge to Terabithia. Jon’s most recent album, Promising Promises, was released last year and includes his latest single “Summer Is Over,” featuring Sara Bareilles. For more information, visit www.jonmcl.com.

About Sidewalk Prophets:
Sidewalk Prophets is a contemporary Christian band from Nashville, Tennessee. Their album These Simple Truths contained the single “The Words I Would Say,” which is also featured on WOW Hits 2010 and WOW Hits 2011. The group won the 2010 GMA Dove Award for “New Artist of the Year.” The band has toured in the Rock and Worship Roadshow with MercyMe and Francesca Battistelli, among others. For more information, visit www.sidewalkprophets.com.

About Christa Wells:
Known for the past several years for her poignant, poetic, and honest songwriting, Christa Wells is finding her own place as a performing artist. Christa has written with numerous Nashville artists and has songs cut by artists such as Plumb, Point of Grace, Sara Groves, Selah, and Natalie Grant. Several have been hit singles, most notably “Held” recorded by Natalie Grant, which received airplay in both Christian and mainstream markets and earned her the GMA “Songwriter of the Year” award in 2006. For more information, visit www.christawellsmusic.com.

About Jeff Owen:
Jeff Owen is the lead guitarist for Tenth Avenue North, a contemporary Christian band from West Palm Beach, Florida. The band has toured with David Crowder Band, Casting Crowns, and MercyMe, and headlines their own dates throughout the United States. They won the “New Artist of the Year” award at the 40th GMA Dove Awards in April 2009. The band’s song “By Your Side” won the GMA Dove Award for “Song of the Year” in 2010. For more information, visit www.tenthavenuenorth.com.

About Alanna Story:
Born in Bellingham, Washington, into a family with a deep faith and musical heritage, Ally and Anna Long were captivated by the musical arts from an early age. In 2009, Alanna Story released an eight-song EP titled Keep Breathing. The sisters—along with band members Stephen West (guitar), Joel Burkhead (bass), and Ben Hodge (drums) — came back in 2012 with a with a nine-song EP called Flickering Spark. Both projects have earned high praise from music critics and listeners alike. For more information, visit www.alannastory.com.

Global Expo
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Kid’s Place. Your children will receive a Kid’s Place passport when they first arrive. As they visit each part of the world at the Global Expo, they will receive a stamp from that region. Once they’ve completed their trip around the world, they will receive a special surprise! The greatest prize, which is available to guests of all ages, is this experience—the opportunity to connect, grow, and learn together at this year’s Global Expo and make memories that will last a lifetime.

Risk and Restoration

By Sam Collins

For a long time I supposed that the story about the woman healed of hemorrhaging (Mark 5:24–34) was a simple case of a shy individual trying to avoid the first-century equivalent of tabloid publicity. Why else would she approach everything so stealthily? I figured she just didn’t want her picture sharing the same front page with accounts of reputed Big Foot sightings on the outskirts of Jericho.

I also theorized that she was reluctant to pester a busy celebrity like Jesus. I could understand that. I’m a little backward around big-name people myself. If I were in a public gathering and saw persons of note (like Ryne Sandberg, a Hall of Famer who used to play second base for the Chicago Cubs, or Bill Gaither, who sometimes plays second fiddle to Gloria—just kidding, Bill), I’d automatically assume they wouldn’t want to be bothered by some obscure schmo like me.

I eventually discovered, however, that timidity probably had little to do with the manner in which this woman approached the Lord. She didn’t “sneak up” on Jesus out of choice; she sought to remain undetected out of apparent necessity.

Remember, this individual had suffered from chronic bleeding for twelve years (a span equivalent to six terms in congress or the perceived duration of many of my sermons). Because of her condition she was considered ceremonially unclean, literally untouchable. She had every reason to believe that a respectable Jew would respond to her approach as a honey-coated sunbather might respond to an oncoming swarm of killer bees.

That put Jesus’ reaction to this encounter in a whole new light for me. Before, I must admit to feeling just a tinsy bit annoyed that the Lord failed to honor this lady’s desire for anonymity.

Then it hit me. Perhaps Jesus was not trying to embarrass the woman; maybe he was shaming those who had shunned her. In essence his actions could have been saying: “For twelve long years you kept this suffering child of God at arm’s length. Heartless, letter-of-the-law fools! As has just been demonstrated, a simple touch would not have defiled you, but it might have contributed to her comfort and healing.”

A great many people are marginalized in our society and by our churches for one reason or another. Perhaps they have pasts that shock us. Maybe they suffer from addictions, physical diseases, or emotional maladies we believe that faithful, godly people never develop or grapple with. If Jesus’ example teaches us anything, it is this: Contamination is more likely to come from inner attitudes than from external threats. To restore human lives, Christians must risk human contact.

The views expressed in this column are not necessarily those of Church of God Ministries or, at points, even the writer, but are written with tongue firmly planted in cheek to hopefully provoke a leavening bit of laughter and a smidgen of thought.

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“My prayer life is so much stronger since the kids got out of school.”

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“My prayer life is so much stronger since the kids got out of school.”