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CHRISTIAN RETAIL ASSOCIATION

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**PRICE CHECK:**  
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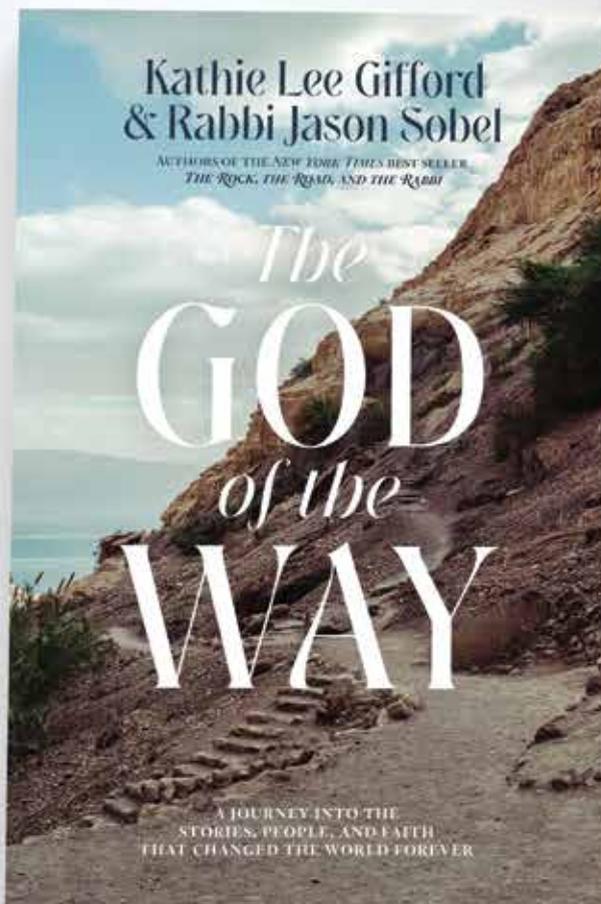
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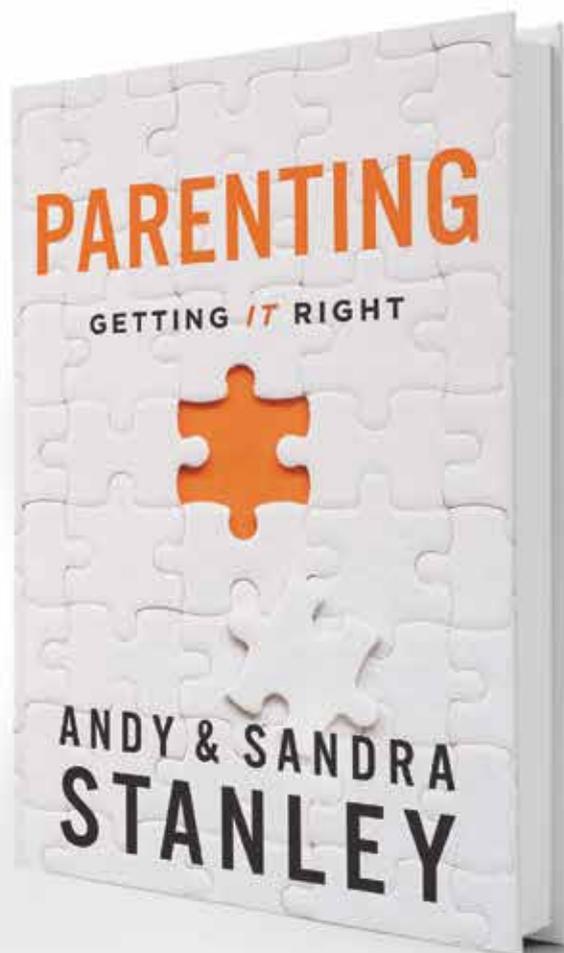
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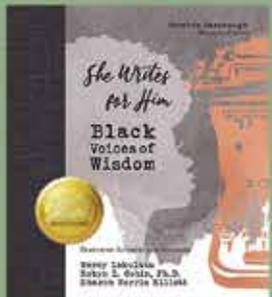
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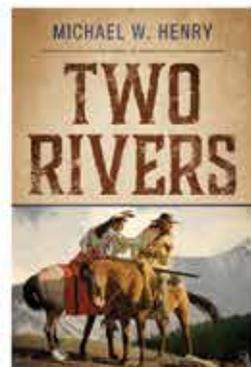
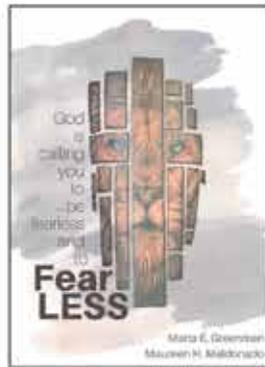
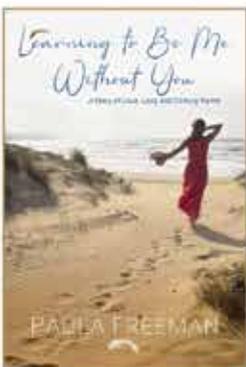
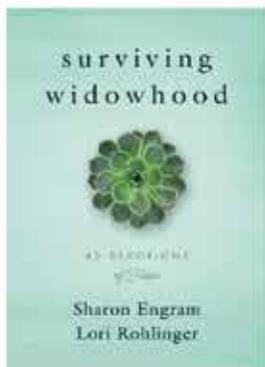
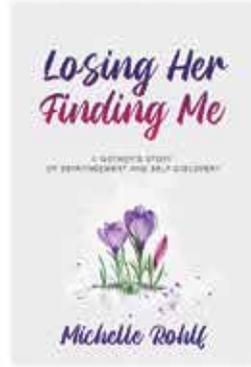
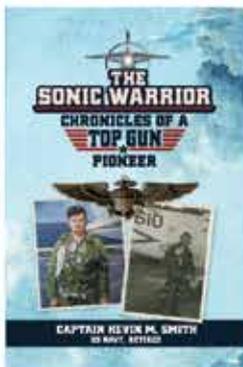
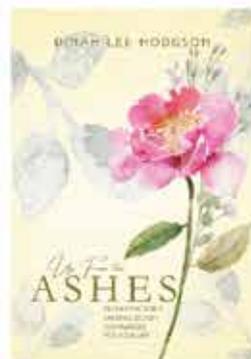
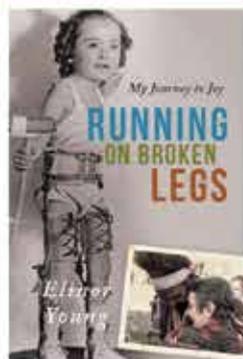
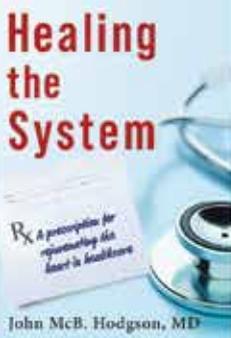
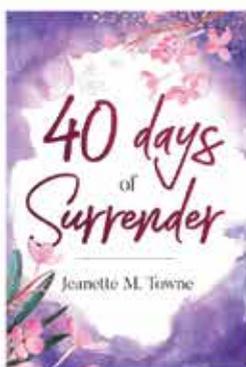
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FROM THE *president*

# observing book lovers

I usually attend our local antiquarian book fair. It is the largest in the South (70 booths) and the third largest in the nation.

They use modern methods to sell old books. Here is their social media quote:

*“Yes, we’re quite aware that we’re using 21st century media to help spread the word about the delights of 16th century media. The irony is delicious.”*

When it comes to people-watching at this show, the majority of attendees look like you and me. The booksellers are from all across this great country, traveling in vans and often pulling trailers full of paper and ink treasures.

Most of the books are not rare or expensive, but the most interesting ones are. How about a *Star Wars* #1 comic book for over \$10,000? A first edition signed copy of *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway for over \$15,000? Or the book club edition of the same title, without a dust jacket, for \$3? Fine literature? You can find *Poems: Second Series (1891)* by Emily Dickinson in good condition for \$2,000.

But what about Christian books? Are they collectable? Well, collector’s editions of Christian books are a little harder to find. There was a wonderful vintage two volume set of *Ben-Hur*, numbered 8 of 250, in slip cases and bound in cream-colored vellum with deckle edge pages for \$600. This was not a first edition. The first edition was printed in 1880 by Harper Brothers, the predecessor to HarperCollins. (True first editions have a green cover, not blue, advised the dealer offhandedly.) This incredibly deluxe, illustrated set was the first gift edition, printed in 1892.

After absorbing enough book collector trivia to fill an unabridged hard drive, I settled on a 70-year-old, and long out of print, Bible commentary on 1 Corinthians in mint condition for \$15.

Why am I writing about old books? Well, consider this. In our industry, there are a few Christian bookstores that sell new and used Christian books. A used book section can add to the interest and ambiance, as well as the bottom line, of your store. It is worth considering.

Going to the antiquarian book show was an interesting learning experience to see how other booksellers ply their trade.

Like Christian Product Expo, it was fun. There was a press of enthusiastic buyers. I met interesting people and perused interesting tomes. Unlike CPE, I had to pay to get in and I had to buy my own lunch!



My best to you,

*Bob Munce*

Bob Munce  
CRA President



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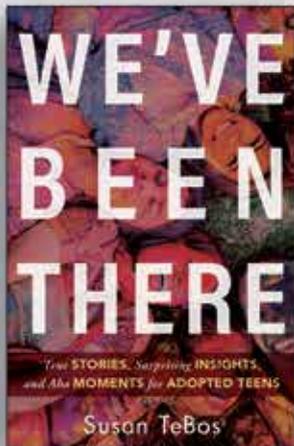
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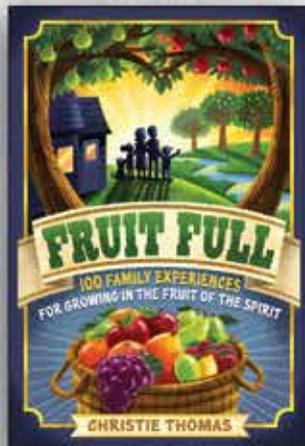
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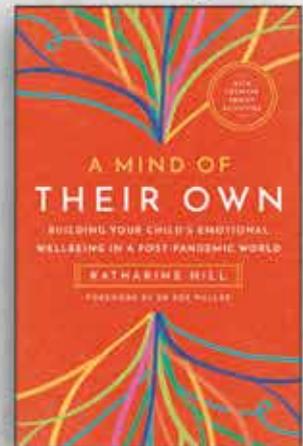
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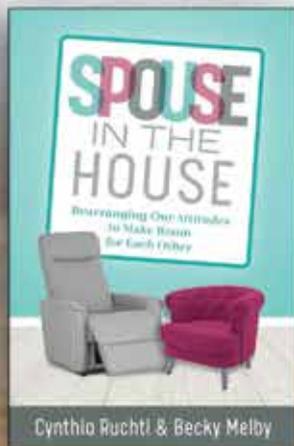
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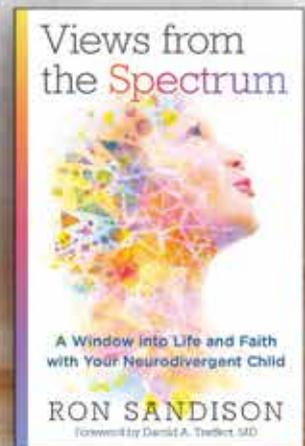
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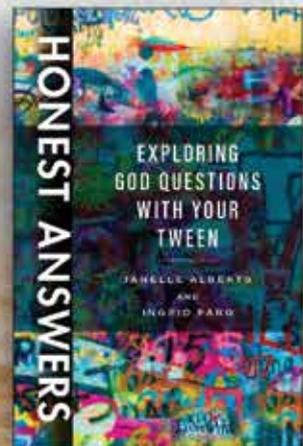
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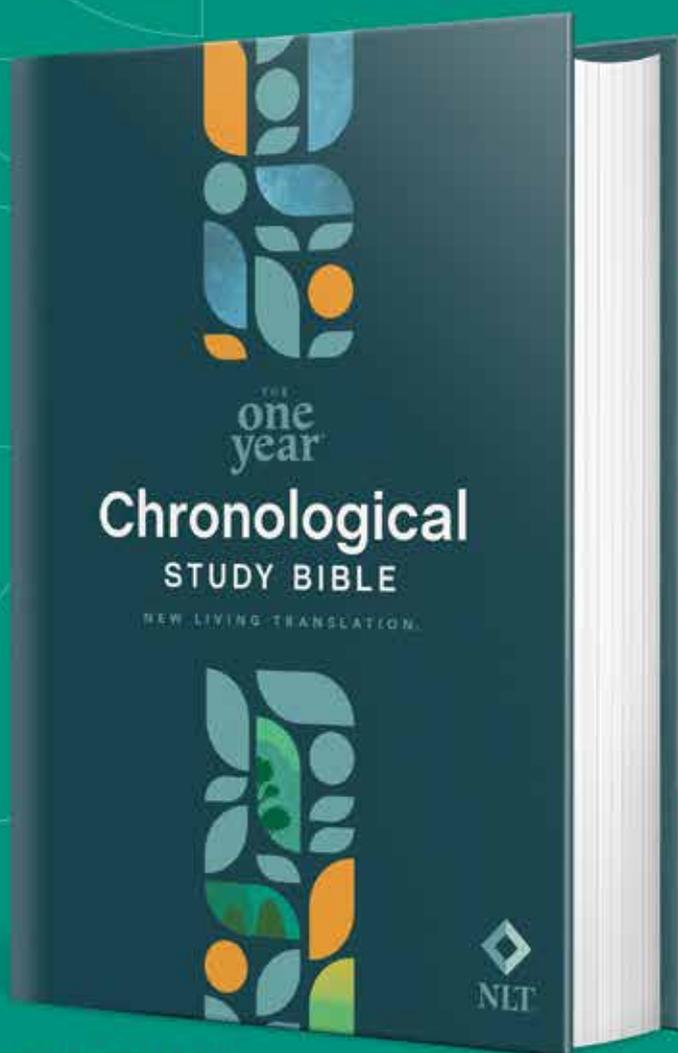
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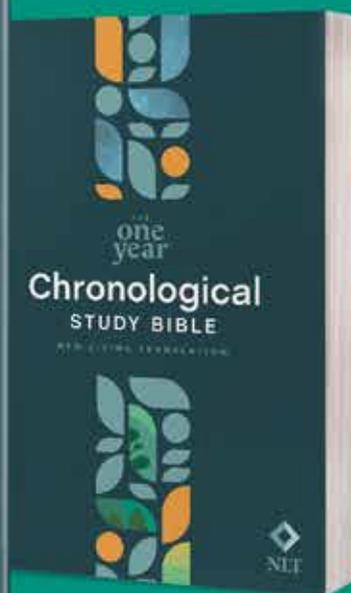
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INFLATION

# Price Check

Operating in the  
Age of Surcharges

If you've been to the grocery store or gas pump recently, you know that prices are going up everywhere. Manufacturing and retail are no exception. Perhaps the most noticeable form of price increase in our industry has been the surcharge.

Prior to 2021, the word *surcharge* likely wasn't even a part of your everyday vocabulary as a retailer. Now you may be asking, what are surcharges, why do we need them and what can we do about them?

We asked vendors and retailers in our industry the same questions. Here are their responses:

**Les Jones, Sales Manager, Genesis Marketing**

When the supply chain issues hit in 2020, the cost of shipping products to the U.S. increased exponentially. A container that normally would have cost \$4,000 to receive went to as much as \$25,000. For most of 2020, the manufacturers tried to offset that increase themselves, but they finally needed to pass along the cost to retailers.

Manufacturers had two options: increase their prices or add a surcharge to orders to offset some of the added costs. Some who believed the increase would be short-term elected to go with the surcharge and keep it as a short-term pass through of the costs. Increasing prices would be more of a long-term solution (usually prices go up easier than they come down).

So some manufacturers began charging a surcharge, an extra expense that is usually a percentage of the total order, to recoup some of their additional shipping costs. Manufacturers still paid the largest part themselves.

The increased shipping costs have lingered into 2022 and look to be around into 2023. Some manufacturers have stopped the surcharge and moved to the long-term strategy of price increases.

Retailers struggled with the surcharges because there was no good way for them to pass those to the consumer and recoup their money. Now with most manufacturers going to the price increases, the retailers will be more apt to recoup their additional costs.

*Surcharges were not a way to increase profits but a way to offset expenses*

The surcharges impact everyone negatively. Consumers do not want to pay more, stores do not want to pay more and manufacturers do not want to pay more. Surcharges were not a way to increase profits but a way to offset expenses.

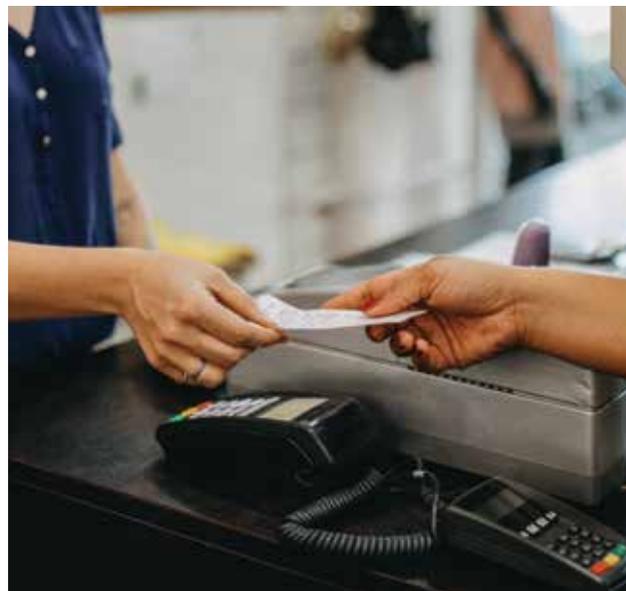
In the end, the consumer will pay more for products just because it costs more to get them to the market.

**Sharon Boston, Strategic Account Executive, burton + BURTON**

Beginning last year, our industry's supply chain was affected by unprecedented price increases in labor, material costs and especially transportation. Initially, b+B absorbed these costs, but then we reached a point where we had to impose a surcharge on imported items. Not all items are subject to a surcharge—it varies by item. Additionally, we are hoping to eliminate this surcharge later this year. We are constantly monitoring the situation for any new developments and will communicate any changes as they occur. We appreciate all of our customers' understanding and support during this unique time.

**Kevin VanDuyne, Joy Christian Bookstore, Wabash, IN**

We are seeing surcharges on most of our gift product lines now. They are varying based on vendor, and we are not able to identify any rhyme or reason to put any balance to this added cost. We are adding this cost to the individual item cost and amortizing it across all the items received. It's generally adding between \$1–2 per item, plus the 95 cents we have always added to cover the freight.



**Jilaine Graber, Faith & Life Books and Gifts, Berne, IN**

Currently, only a few of the companies that I order from are assessing surcharges. I have not made any changes at the moment, but I will continue to monitor the situation. One gift company I do order from has a 10 percent surcharge plus shipping, so if I can get similar things elsewhere, I do that. I currently have not noticed publishers adding surcharges. I truly appreciate free freight options from many publishers, distributors and some gift companies when meeting minimum amounts that need to be ordered.

continued on page 12 >>



**Julie Jones, Choices Christian Living Store,  
Newton, IA**

Surcharges hurt. For some vendors, they are a significant cost (30 percent sometimes). I have been increasing my prices to cover the costs. I'll be closely monitoring to see if I need to adjust the prices to get product to move; but at this point, I am passing those costs on to the customers. I think they know there is inflation happening and that costs are rising on everything.

**Vicki Geist, Cedar Springs Christian Store,  
Knoxville, TN**

Surcharges have been a real, new expense; and they have become more of a norm with vendors than an exception. There really isn't anything we can do about it if we want to do business with that vendor. In the case of some of the gift vendors that do not pre-price the product, you can mark up the product enough to help cover the shipping and surcharges. Shipping charges have also increased, so you really have to add those together to get your bottom line on what it is costing to get that product in your door. Unfortunately, I believe this is a new cost that is here to stay, at least for a while, and we have to pay attention to it to make sure that this charge does not eat up our profit on the items that we are buying.

*We simply view this  
as another cost of  
goods and raise prices  
where we can*

**Rick Lewis, Logos Book Store of Dallas, TX**

We've found that many of our gift companies are charging "ocean charges," ranging from 3–12 percent. Most claim these will be temporary. The publishers seem to be more realistic. They are just raising their wholesale prices. With the price of paper alone going up 10–15 percent last year, it had to happen. We simply view this as another cost of goods and raise prices where we can. We offer sales and coupons to help take the bite out of it for the customer. I know God is keeping our store/ministry going, so that usually keeps the worry at bay. I have trusted Him through rent increases, eBooks, Amazon, the economic downturn of 2008, being broken into, the challenge of finding good workers, COVID, being forced to move the store and now inflation that is plaguing our country. He alone knows the future. It's up to me to know Him and to continue to meet the needs of everyone who walks through my front door, as best as I can. **CRA**

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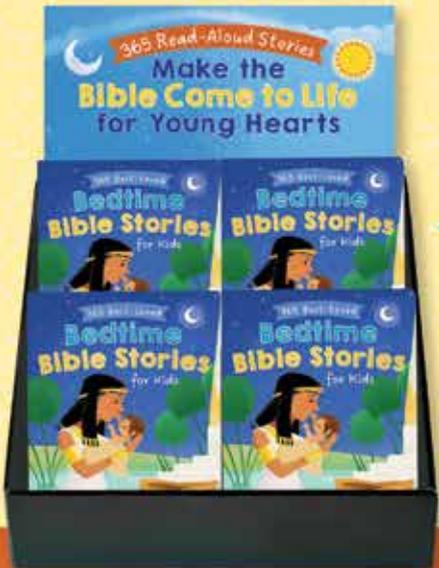


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# What's New with You?





Nothing much. Same old, same old. Business as usual. Those are some of the typical responses to the question, What's new with you? Whether an attempt to keep the conversation short or a statement of fact, they're kind of a letdown. Sigh. Instead, what if there was something new you could share?

Fear of failure is often the biggest thing that holds people back from trying something new. But any parent of a picky eater knows, "You don't know until you try it." Sure, there's a chance it may be horrible, but there's also a chance it may be something amazing!

When it comes to trying something new in business, perhaps you think you lack the skills, time or resources. Again, you don't know until you try. But also, you don't have to try everything at once. Start small. Give it time. Assess to see if it's working or if it needs to be tweaked. And learn from others.

continued on page 16 >>

Here are some of the new things your fellow retailers are trying:

## MAKERS MARKET

Twila Shreves, owner of Hidden Treasures Gifts & Book-Tea-Que in Altoona, IA, has learned, “You can’t just stay the same and hope it will work again.”

*You can’t just stay the same and hope it will work again*

At the beginning of 2022, Twila’s business partner decided to retire. The business partner was sharing the rent, so Twila needed a way to bring in extra income to cover the deficit. As a result, Hidden Treasures now houses a Makers Market.

Twila says she has about 30 local vendors, many of which were previously carried in her store on a consignment basis. Now Twila has them pay rent; however, this also offers the vendors an opportunity to highlight more of their products. Plus, it’s a win-win for customers who want to support local craftsmen. Included in the offerings is an in-home baker, who is licensed by the state and provides prepackaged bakery items.

Twila has plans to add a coffee and tea bar that will fit well with the “come in and browse or sit and have a pastry” feel of the new Hidden Treasures. She is also planning to make a space for classes, crafting, Bible studies and meetings.



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## SATURDAY SOCIALS

In Port Orange, FL, FromMyLibrary2URS has been through many exterior as well as interior changes. They have grown from an original store size of less than 400 square feet to a larger space of 1,200 square feet and currently are in a space of about 2,500 square feet.

How are they surviving and what are they doing to be innovative and reach new customers?

Each Saturday, Sam and Susan Titera offer a “gathering” of sorts to encourage customers to come in and bring a friend. The first Saturday of the month, Susan hosts a greeting card making class. The cost is \$15 for the class, but Susan also gives attendees a gift certificate to spend in the store, so potential customers are shopping in the store as well as spending time crafting.

The second Saturday is another crafting event using Silhouette or Cricut, which are popular tools for creating cutouts or stencils for making custom T-shirts, stickers and other items. Again, this is an event where customers are encouraged to bring friends, or more potential new customers.

The third Saturday is a Bible journaling workshop. There is also a class fee, but a gift card is issued for store purchases.

On a monthly basis, the store offers a Small Business Saturday event. Businesses such as Mary Kay and Thirty-One are invited to set up in the store and of course advertise to their customers, hopefully bringing in new customers who might return for future shopping needs.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Purchasing goods that support a cause is one of the biggest reasons for consumer spending among millennials. Michelle Brown of Word of God Bible and Gift in Rineyville, KY, went outside the walls of her bookstore and into her community. She found other non-profits and churches in her area that support a cause that she is also passionate about and started partnering with them. Michelle also has a business that works with churches. She uses her connection to the churches and her store to build relationships for both businesses “through commonality.”

*We are finding that variety is key to having customers excited about our store*

## PRODUCT VARIETY

According to Kevin VanDuyne of Joy Christian Bookstore in Wabash, IN, “Something new is always challenging. We are finding that variety is key to having customers excited about our store.” Kevin says he does this by constantly bringing in new product lines, including items that might not appeal

to him because he knows that customers can have different tastes. He starts by ordering small quantities and evaluating the return on investment. If the product moves well, then he will place larger reorders. He also informs customers of the new products by promoting them on Facebook and his store marquee. "We consistently hear from our customers that we have such great choices," Kevin says. "This is the validation we use to keep trying new things."

## BIBLE CLASSES

After noticing an increase in Bible sales and the types of questions customers were asking about Bibles, Julie Jones of Choices Christian Living Store in Newton, IA, is beginning a Bible foundation course at her store. Julie says the class is intended to help individuals who are seeking, are new to Christianity or are new to reading their Bible to understand how and where to start. "For those of us who have read the Bible our entire lives, we forget how complex it is for those who have no background," Julie shares. To inform customers of this new Bible class, she created bag stuffers and marketed to everyone who purchased a Bible. The first class started in May 2022, and she hopes to offer this on a regular basis.



## TARGETING TEENS

Michele Yarbrough took a leap of faith when she opened The Armory Bookstore in Monroe, GA, a year ago, during a pandemic. Michele says she literally started small in an 800-square-foot space with a unique pop-up shop concept. It didn't take long for the community to show their support and for the store to move to a prime location over twice the size on their town's main street.

One of their target markets is pre-teens and teens. Michele's 19-year-old daughter works at the store and keeps her pulse on that age range and products. According to Michele, hand-painted Bibles, tassel bookmarks and apparel have really taken off for them, and she believes this target market is why.

Recently, Michele approached a local youth leader about going through the book *Who Are You Following?* with a group of teen girls. Michele has a back room that they rent out for large groups, so they will meet at the store as well as other locations.

## COFFEE TASTINGS

Creating her own version of a popular trend, Jessica Lachney, owner of Book Nook in Ball, LA, hosted a "Ladies' Night Iced Coffee Tasting." For only \$15, ladies could enjoy finger foods, mini cupcakes and a flight board, which is a paddle board for drinks, with four five-ounce coffees in gourmet flavors, including Snickers and s'mores.

Just by promoting the event in her store and on Facebook, Jessica had over 80 women attend. The Friday night coffee tasting offered plenty of space for ladies to sit, sip, fellowship—and shop. As an added incentive, guests received 10% off their total purchases during the event. In two hours, Book Nook generated over \$1,800 in sales. And since it was Mother's Day weekend, ladies were invited to shop for what they wanted and put it aside for their loved ones to buy before Sunday, and still receive the 10% discount.

"We've decided to do this as a monthly ladies' night event because so many asked to do it again," Jessica says.



## BOOK FAIRS

Earlier this year, Jessica Lachney also held a two-day book fair at a local school in conjunction with the Munce Group's Ready? Let's Read! book club program. Teachers selected products from the flyers that they felt would be suitable for their students. And Jessica added other items such as Warmies, fidget poppers and gift items for parents and teachers like coffee mugs, slippers and cookbooks. Jessica created signage for the event using Canva and gave a 10% off in-store coupon for each purchase. Sales from the book fair were over \$4,000. She has another book fair scheduled for October. **CRA**

## Summer Reading Program

by Dawn Stoltzfus, Gospel Book Store, Berlin, OH

Merv and I purchased our bookstore three years ago this summer. As a homeschooling family, we knew immediately we wanted to expand the kids' book section. We converted what was once a very large, successful music space into a large offering of kids' books. We also knew we wanted to offer a kids' story time on Tuesday mornings throughout the school year and, in the summer, offer a summer reading program. We see the millennials engaging with us because we are creating connection. Often, they will pick up a gift for someone while their child is enjoying the story time.

When we started the summer reading program in 2020, we did a bit of advertising and had 75 children enroll. Last summer we had 85. This year, we hope to grow that number even more.

I have been working on an age-appropriate suggested book list for moms. Sometimes moms just feel overwhelmed by 'which' book is the best for their child. This list should help take some of the pressure off of them.

We have asked two local businesses to partner with us and give prizes for the summer reading program. After completing their second week of reading, children are able to come in and get a certificate for a bag of free popcorn from the specialty popcorn and fudge shop up the street. After

completing their fourth week, they receive a coupon for a free ice cream cone from the grocery store that is close to our store. And finally, the best prize of all is a free book. We have a book basket from which the kids can choose. So far all the books have come from our publishers who have generously donated these books to our summer reading program.

We believe a 'story-formed' child will go on to live his own story well if he is exposed to good books. We are thrilled to be a brick and mortar store that has the unique privilege of offering quality books in this heavily saturated internet age. We don't take this privilege for granted.

### Tips for Starting a Summer Reading Program:

1. Get local businesses involved.
2. If you need help with crafts, recruit teens from your church.
3. Hand sanitizer and a little space are both great ideas.
4. If you have limited room in your store, create a "make-it and take-it" reading program with packets for kids to take home.

## New! Pop-up Pencil Pouches & Sequin Journals



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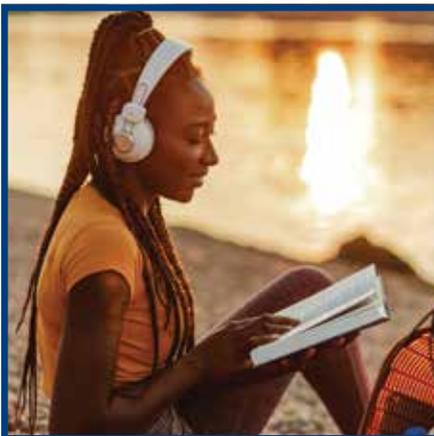
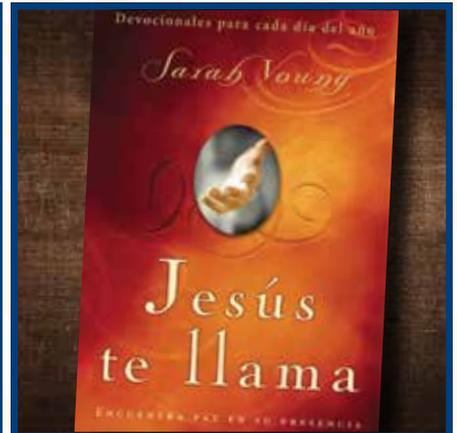
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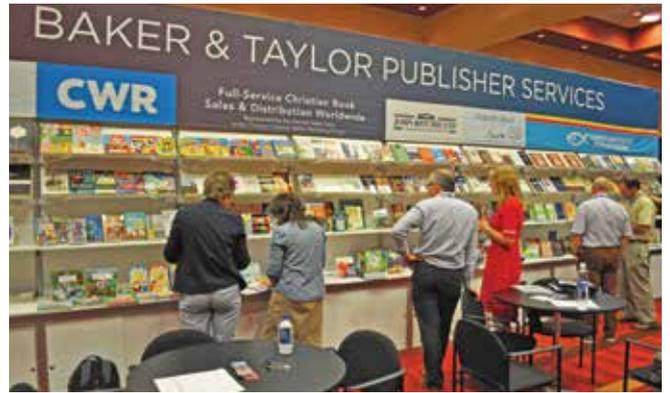
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# The Value of Meeting Face to Face

by Christy Dollins, Director of Advancement, Trade Shows & Associations

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the words Christian Product Expo? For me, and for quite a few regular attendees I've spoken with, it's the memories of people I've met, conversations we've had, things we've laughed over and things we've prayed about together. I think of speakers who gave a timely word and touched on something I was dealing with at the time. Or vendors who asked how I was doing and took a moment out of selling to pray with me. I think of the movies, the concerts and the fun I had that I never would have experienced on my own at home. CPE is a trade show, but it truly is so much more.

A lot of trade shows have moved to just having a virtual presence. Technology is a huge part of our lives and helps us in so many ways. But technology can never replace the bonds that are formed from talking with others face to face. Our industry places us in a position to be the church in our businesses every day. One of the priorities and responsibilities store owners have is to provide the best products for their customers.

I can relay countless times I have purchased something online only to be disappointed when it arrived because it wasn't exactly what I envisioned. Attending the CPE show allows you to see and feel all the new products coming out, and you can make informed buying decisions for what you know your market will want to see in your store. You can hear the inspiration for an author's new release, see the different

subjects being written on and decide the mix of genres you need for your customer base.

We've all heard people say that our industry is declining because the big franchised Christian bookstores closed. But we know the opposite is true. This just paved the way for the resurgence of independent Christian bookstores.

Because so many people have been looking for hope and discovered the value in shopping locally throughout this pandemic, our industry has come out financially healthier in most cases than prior to the pandemic.

We all need each other—our businesses can't thrive on their own. Publishers, authors, gift companies, distributors and stores need each other in order to minister to the end consumer. CPE provides the venue to meet together to strengthen our businesses and ourselves. We often hear that the show is a family reunion. The friendships you make at the show are so valuable because everyone there knows what you go through on

a daily basis. They understand better than anyone else because they live it too.

At CPE, we see the power of multiplication. If you take one author speaking to 100 stores in attendance, then those 100 stores post about this author on their social media, and each store has a minimum of 300 followers, that's 30,000 end consumers that were just reached in under a minute while at



continued on page 23 >>



christian product expo™

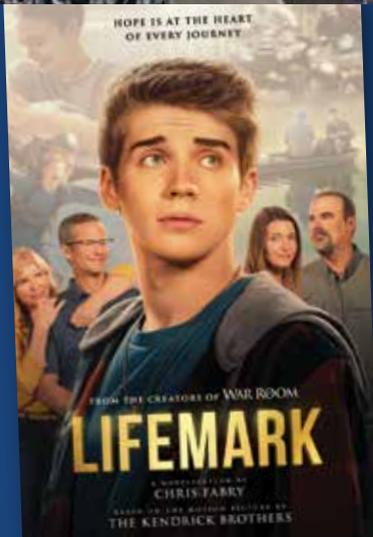
# LEXINGTON '22 HIGHLIGHTS

Over 60 authors\* giving away books at

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MIKE  
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**Lifemark** is the new Kendrick Brothers film, starring Kirk Cameron. From the team that brought you the movies *Courageous* and *War Room* comes *Lifemark*, the new film inspired by a true story of adoption, redemption and hope.

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Visit [www.cpeshow.com/retailers](http://www.cpeshow.com/retailers) for full details



CPE (and these numbers are extremely conservative, especially after adding in publishers or gift manufacturers, along with authors and their audience). We also invite the media to attend each show, and this show is shaping up to have a large media representation. Retailers, meet with the media at the show and work with them to promote your store. Meet with authors at the show and see who lives near you so you can coordinate an in-store event with them. We have the power to reach many. Let's give them the message of the gospel together and see how far to the end of the earth we can reach!

*CPE provides the venue to meet together to strengthen our businesses and ourselves*

Be sure to visit [www.cpeshow.com](http://www.cpeshow.com) for full details and to register. Those who are registered will receive weekly show updates detailing check in, scheduled events and more, so register today and don't miss out! When we are planning the show, we strive to ensure there is time to learn, time to do business, time to network and time to have fun! Expect a busy three days and be prepared to leave looking forward to the next reunion on February 5-7, in Columbus, GA!

**CRA**

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# EXPERIENCE *Lexington*



## Horse Farm Tours

Beautiful horse farms have been part of the Bluegrass since the region was first settled—and so have horse farm visitors. There are about 450 horse farms in the region (about 150 in Fayette County alone). They're all working farms—which means you should never just drop by—but more than a few allow visitors by appointment or through arrangements with professional tour companies.

There are three ways you can revisit racing history, see the world's most fabulous farms and barns, get up close and personal with Kentucky Derby winners or discover an exciting variety of horse breeds.

1. Book a tour.
2. Hire a private guide.
3. Do it yourself by making appointments at farms.

For a list of companies, visit [www.visitlex.com](http://www.visitlex.com).



You can also experience it all at one place at the Kentucky Horse Park ([kyhorsepark.com](http://kyhorsepark.com)). The Kentucky Horse Park is a working horse farm, international equestrian competition venue and educational park located in Lexington. Nearly 50 different breeds of horses live on 1,200 acres of rolling hills, quintessential of Kentucky's Bluegrass Region. Enjoy a variety of shows and activities, from grooming demonstrations, the daily Parade of Breeds, horse-drawn trolley tours and more. Visit with past Kentucky Derby winners, visit museums dedicated to horses, saddle up and go for a ride or even attend one of the dozens of major horse shows hosted at the Kentucky Horse Park every year.



## Art at the Cathedral

Celebrate the visual arts in a historic house of worship established in 1796. According to the church's website: "Our goal is to provide 'sacred space' for artists who feel that visual art is one of their modes of spirituality." Christ Church Cathedral is located at 166 Market Street, Lexington, KY. The exhibit is open weekdays 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. and admission is free.



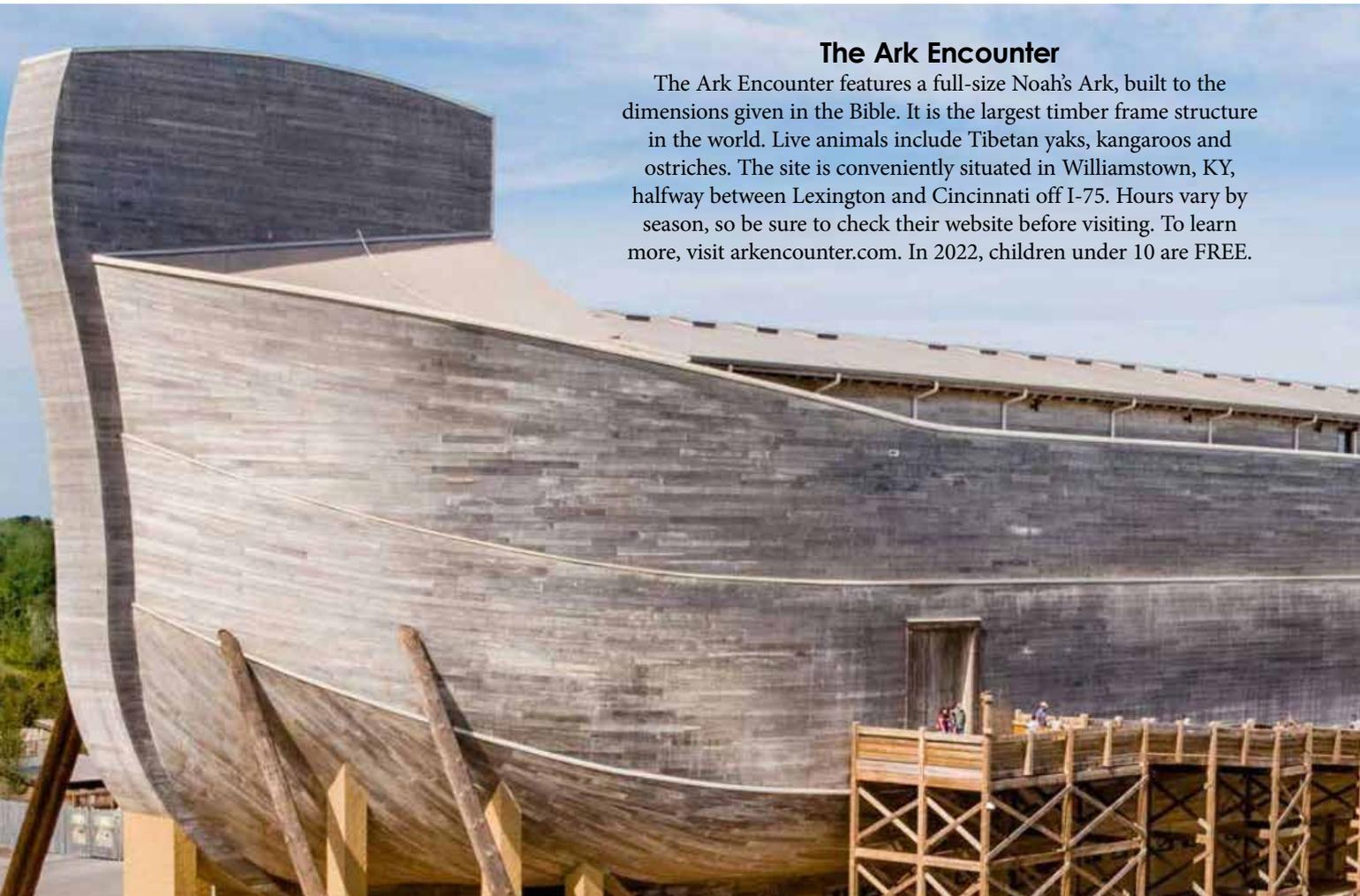
## **The Creation Museum**

The Creation Museum is a high-tech 75,000-square-foot facility that allows families to experience earth history as God has revealed it in the Bible. At the heart of the Creation Museum is a chronological retelling of biblical history in seven parts. Guests step back in time, beginning with Creation, and fast-forward to Christ's return. The museum also boasts a fun-filled, 200-seat special effects theater, a state-of-the-art planetarium, a petting zoo, nature trails, zip lines and lots more. Hours vary by season, so be sure to check their website before visiting. To learn more, visit [creationmuseum.org](http://creationmuseum.org). In 2022, children under 10 are FREE.



## **Boone Creek Outdoors**

See Boone Creek from a bird's eye view accompanied by experienced guides. Soar on ziplines as long as 1,400 feet and as high as 200 feet. Traverse bridges and staircases as you make your way through the native hardwood canopy. Guides will share local history and knowledge of the unique ecosystem of Boone Creek and the Kentucky Palisades Region. Open Tuesday – Sunday 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.



## **The Ark Encounter**

The Ark Encounter features a full-size Noah's Ark, built to the dimensions given in the Bible. It is the largest timber frame structure in the world. Live animals include Tibetan yaks, kangaroos and ostriches. The site is conveniently situated in Williamstown, KY, halfway between Lexington and Cincinnati off I-75. Hours vary by season, so be sure to check their website before visiting. To learn more, visit [arkencounter.com](http://arkencounter.com). In 2022, children under 10 are FREE.



# Lexington

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WHERE

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Where the Industry Does Business

*"Amazing training, networking and connection with vendors. Highlight of my year and a great time of renewal."*

Granger Community Church Bookstore, Granger, IN

*"CPE is beneficial – educationally, spiritually and business-wise. Thank you!!!"*

TJ's Christian Bookstore, Cedar Falls, IA

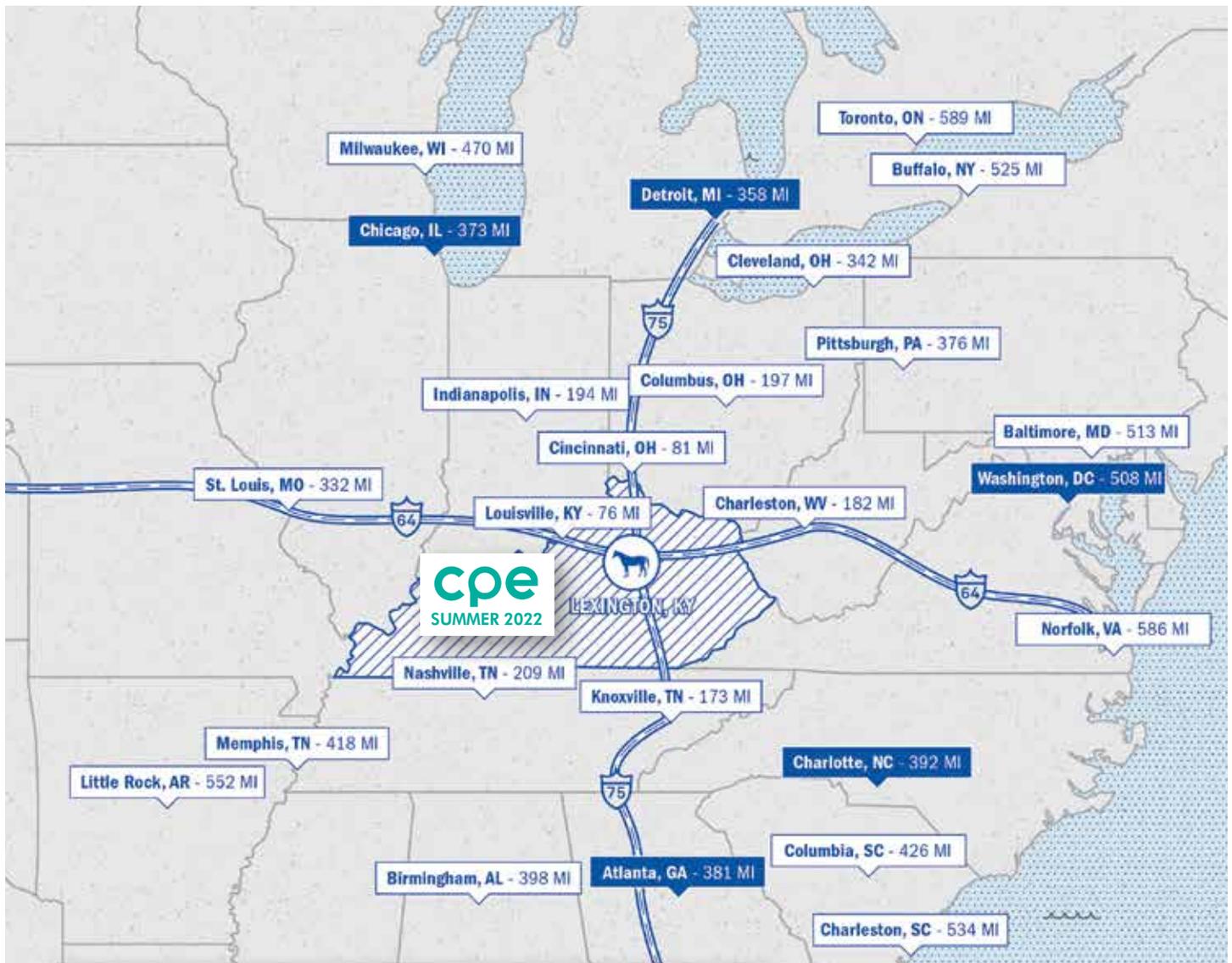
*"The training and relationships between owners and vendors are priceless"*

Words of Wisdom, Swansea, IL



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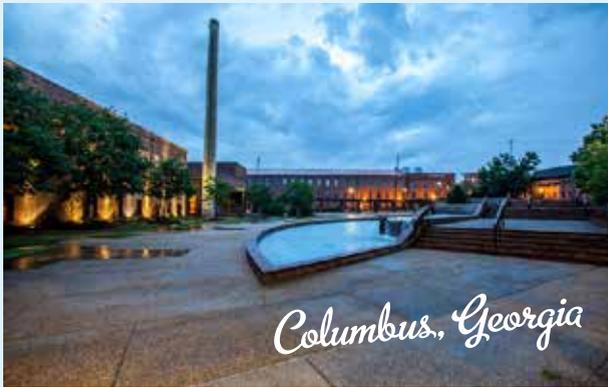
-  Highway I-64
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 THAN YOU  
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# Check Out Where CPE Is Heading Next



**WINTER '23**  
February 5-7



*Columbus, Georgia*



**SUMMER '23**  
August 6-8



*Lexington, Kentucky*

## Get to Know Your CRA Board Members



Meet your board members throughout the show and stop by the CRA booth.

### **JACK SAVAGE**

Jack owned and managed Jack's Church Supplies for 62 years before retiring last year. Jack and his wife, Ruth Ann, are still active in the Christian retail industry, mentoring store owners.



### **JON CURTISS**

Word of Life Christian Bookstore was founded in 1961 by Jon's parents, Joe and Evelyn Curtiss. Now managed by Jon, Word of Life is a leading Christian retailer in the Los Angeles community, serving more than 400 churches and thousands of customers throughout the country.



### **DENNIS LOVVORN**

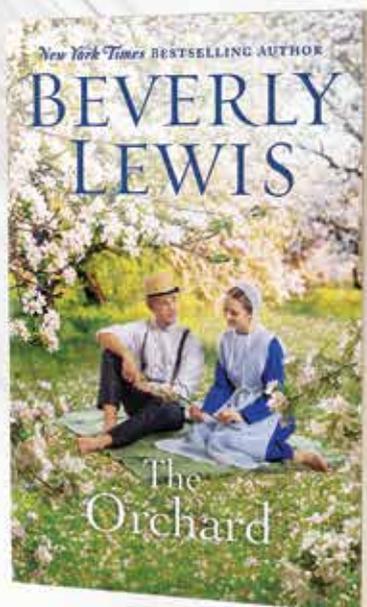
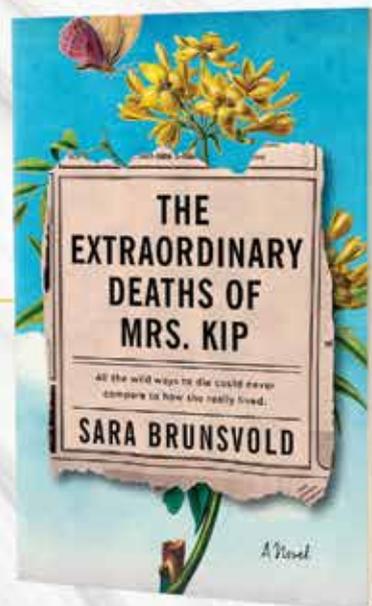
Dennis and his wife, Andrea, just celebrated the 28th anniversary of opening their store in Shelbyville, TN. Growing from a 1,000-square-foot store to an 8,000-square-foot store, they have seen a lot of changes in the industry and have been blessed to learn how to maneuver through them successfully.

# Sure to Please **FICTION FANS!**



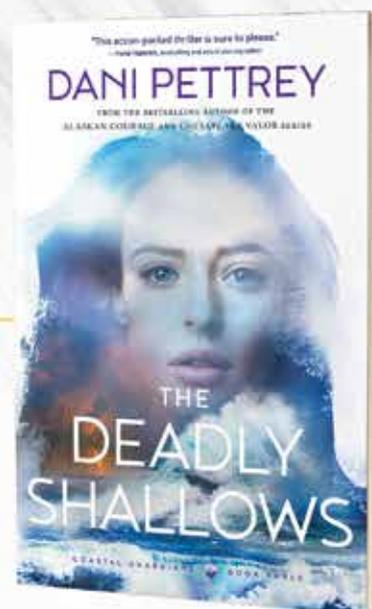
A disgraced former NHL player and a local artist are thrown together when her pottery studio burns to the ground on the day he returns to Prince Edward Island. But as they work together to rebuild, secrets might be revealed and put even their hearts on the line.

Frustrated reporter Aidyn Kelley begrudgingly agrees to help a hospice patient prepare her obituary. But old Clara Kip has some incredible stories—and some surprises up her sleeve—that promise to make this seemingly throwaway assignment a life-changing one.



For generations, Ellie Hostetler's family has tended their orchard, a tradition her twin brother, Evan, will someday continue. But when Evan is drafted for the Vietnam War, the family is shocked to learn he has not sought conscientious objector status. Can Ellie, with the support of a new beau, find the courage to face a future unlike the one she imagined?

Coast Guard flight medic Brooke Kesler was caught in a mass shooting at a Coast Guard graduation—and little does she know that she overheard something that could expose the mastermind's identity. With targets on their backs, Brooke and CGIS agent Noah Rowley must race to find the killer before he strikes again.

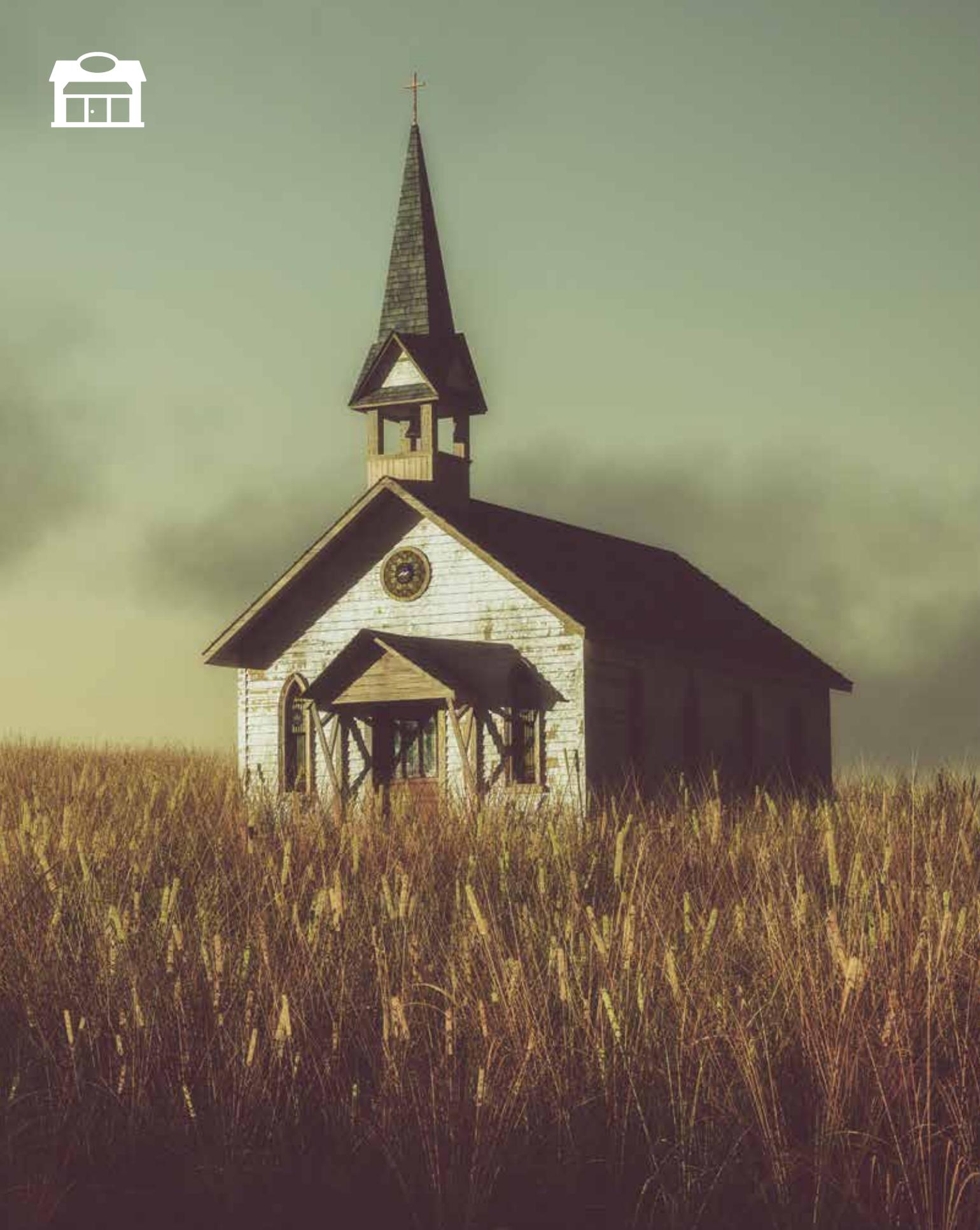


  
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# Building Relationships with Local Churches

Every Tuesday, Ken Goeckner goes to church. Not just one church, but sometimes up to 10 churches in a day. As the owner of a Logos Bookstore, Lifeline Christian Books & Gifts in Effingham, IL, Ken is building relationships.

Relationships take time and effort. The same is true for business relationships with churches.

“These relationships do not develop in one visit—and sometimes not even in 10 visits,” Ken says. It took two years before his best church account placed its first order. That’s why Ken takes the long-view approach. “My main purpose in visiting church offices is not necessarily to sell product but to sell Lifeline as a store to provide them with whatever they need,” Ken explains. Instead of going in for the quick sell, Ken is creating a connection.

How do you connect with the churches in your area? If you ask three different retailers what works for them (which is what we did), you’ll get three different answers (which is what we discovered). Whether you reach out to churches in your area by using snail mail, email, the phone or visiting in person, you will need to find which methods work best for you. For churches that are closed during the week, snail mail may be your best choice. For churches not in driving distance, phone or email are good options. For all others, visiting in person is preferred.

Claudy Jones has been in Christian retail for 16 years, when he became the owner of Lighthouse Cards and Gifts in Detroit, MI. Claudy came from a background of serving churches. His father sold greeting cards and, seeing a need, developed a program to provide churches with greeting card racks.

Presently, Claudy is serving as manager of Discount Bible and Book in Warren, MI. Owners Will and Lorraine Schremp have been in business for 46 years, and the cornerstone to their success has been partnering with the local church.

*We cannot expect to serve or partner with the church by treating them like corporate America*

“We cannot expect to serve or partner with the church by treating them like corporate America,” Claudy says. “All churches will not be able to be reached in the same way or using the same method. But it all starts with relationships and really listening to what they are asking for and finding out how you can help.”

Whichever way (or ways) you do choose to connect with a church, you need to make sure you are connecting with the right person. In other words, the “how” is not as important as the “who.”

According to Claudy, one might think that to work with a church you need to have a connection with the pastor. In fact, the pastor may be your second or even third point of contact. Claudy and Ken both emphasize that it is important to find the person who orders the curriculum or the day-to-

continued on page 30 >>

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day supplies. This could even be a non-staff member.

“I continue to talk to whoever is present at the office—sometimes the secretary, the youth pastor, the lead pastor, the music minister or even the janitor,” Ken says. “You never know who oversees ordering which product. Also, they often tend to be in their own ‘silo,’ so the more people I talk to at any one church office, the more chance the message gets through.”

Speaking of, once you make a connection, what should your message be? “I do not spend a long time at any one church, unless they want to have a longer discussion—usually 15 minutes or so,” Ken says.

On his first visit to a church, Ken will leave them a small colored flyer that lists the services and products available. On the following visit, he will leave other catalogs, such as the accompaniment track list from New Day, which he puts his store sticker on. He has also taken samples of greeting cards for the church secretary to look through. Too much trouble? “Not if you are forming relationships,” Ken says. “If she is happy, she will remember.”

“I do not make distinctions based on church size,” Ken shares. “I visit all the churches that have office hours and are open. There are a number that are small and have older members, but they sometimes have more funds, and you

never know which church will grow and which one will decline, so you need to see them all.”

## *I do not make distinctions based on church size*

Gary Courtney is the owner of One Way Book Store in Selma, AL, which has been in business for almost 50 years. It's important to note that most of his church customers are smaller churches. Targeting larger churches does not always mean more potential volume. Gary shared that those smaller churches have fewer staff members, so they are thankful for his assistance and his ministry.

During his church visits, Ken also delivers invitations to in-store events, including a VBS Open House and Pastor Appreciation Night. Pastor Appreciation Night is an event that Lifeline hosts on the second or third Tuesday in October. Since his store does not offer any regular discounts for pastors, he decided to hold a pastors' night when all church staff can receive 30% off storewide (except for bulk church supplies). Ken starts promoting this on his routes in late August.

continued on page 34 >>

In-store events are a great opportunity to highlight your store's products and services and share information with churches by giving them a current church supply catalog. When new church representatives come into the store, Gary will share a church supply catalog so that the leadership of the church can get a feel for what he can offer them.

What types of products are churches looking for? According to Claudy, you need to meet your customers at the door, talk to them and then listen to them. By understanding their ministry and building a relationship, you can take it a step further and develop a great partnership. A Sunday school teacher or small group leader who is picking up multiple copies of a book or commentary can be your entryway to serving that church.

“When the leader of a teen class is asking for shirts for their youth department, carry that ‘touch point’ to the next department,” Claudy encourages. “Meet one arm of that local church, but don’t just stop with that purchase. Find other ways you can serve them.”

Claudy says that since the pandemic, really listening to the customer has never been more important. He says that today’s church is much more centered around home study, cell groups and families.

For Gary, the majority of his church supply business is curriculum. And as churches are getting back to normal,

this portion of his ministry is increasing again. During the pandemic, he was still able to serve the churches with Communion supplies. He has also seen an increase in churches ordering through his website.

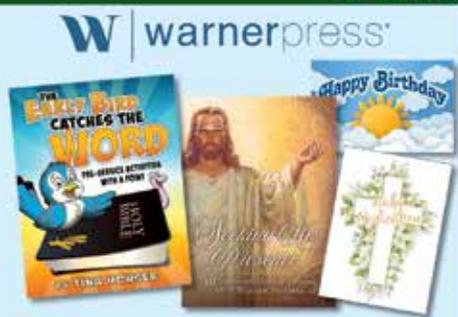
For Ken, as churches re-open and seek to recover from the COVID closures, he says the staff he has built a relationship with are calling to place orders for bulk purchases, such as Bibles and books by the case. During his church visits, Bibles and Communion supplies are still the primary items that churches are interested in, although he also gets orders for workbooks, boxed cards and adult and children’s books.

*Coming alongside  
the local church and  
partnering with them  
is key to Christian  
retail today*

“At this time, after the pandemic, coming alongside the local church and partnering with them is key to Christian retail today,” Claudy concludes. “Finding, growing and maintaining relationships with the local churches is how we stay vital in times like these.” **CRA**



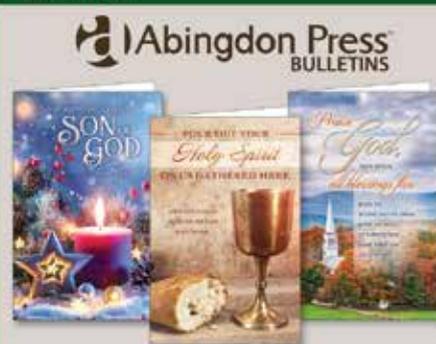
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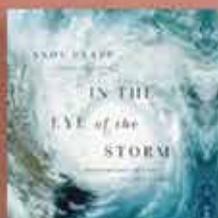
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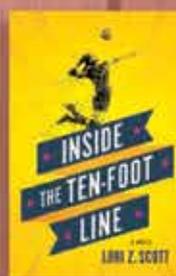
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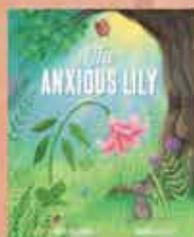


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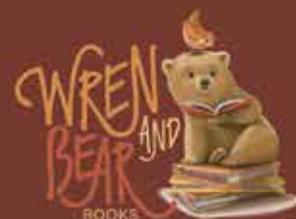
**THE ANXIOUS LILY**  
Releases 3/7/2023



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# Retail Refresh from Floor to Ceiling



There's something inspiring about redesign—the old becoming new. It's a seemingly simple way to breathe new life into a worn-out space. Maybe that's why people can't get enough of shows like *Fixer Upper*. In a matter of minutes, you can see a place that's full of hidden potential transform from barely livable to unbelievable.

A remarkable redesign can happen anywhere, including in your store. Most sources recommend updating your retail space every three to five years. Basically, as soon as you complete one project, you should start saving for the next one. Keep in mind, refreshing your store can be as simple as new light bulbs or a fresh coat of paint.

As you head into summer, traditionally a slower season for retail, why not tackle a redesign project or two? If you are unsure of where to start, here are some areas to concentrate on, from floor to ceiling.

## Floors

Flooring options are numerous and relatively affordable. If you have worn carpet, consider replacing it or removing it altogether and using a stain or an epoxy to finish the bare concrete floor. Laminate is also a durable option that can be easily installed over an existing hard floor.

*Flooring options are numerous and relatively affordable*

Donna McCollough of Dove Christian Supply in Dothan, AL, recently updated the flooring in her store with carpet tiles. For Donna, this was an easy remodeling decision.

“We hadn't replaced the carpet since we moved into the space in 1997,” she shares. “It had several traffic worn areas and stains from spills and being flooded by the restaurant next door.”

Donna prepaid at the end of last year to ensure materials were in stock; however, she coordinated a convenient time, after the holidays, for the installation. Since Donna's store stayed open during the installation, they worked in sections, usually a 1,000–1,500-square-foot area at a time. Once the carpet tiles were installed in an area, they moved everything back and cleared another section. They started on a Thursday afternoon and were able to walk into the store on Tuesday morning with everything completed.

“We explained to our customers what was going on, and most were just as excited as we were,” Donna says. “We told them to let us know if they needed help, and we would look for it together!”

Although every single display in the store had to be moved, they left the front counters stationary because of the computer equipment. Donna purchased extra carpet

tiles to use if they did decide to move it and for any future flooding by their neighbor.

## Walls and Displays

One of the easiest and most inexpensive ways to transform a space is with paint. You can go all out and give every wall a fresh coat or just create an accent wall with a pop of color. You can also use paint to update your displays.

“We have painted our slatwall on numerous occasions over the years,” Donna shares. When painting displays, experiment with an eye-catching color or one that coordinates with the section, such as a pretty shade of pink for women's product or red for Christmas décor.



In addition to painting, try repurposing old displays from stores closing or using different materials to create your displays. Donna has found a budget-friendly way to create a display with a big impact by using pallet board. According to Donna, it's free and fairly easy to use by breaking apart or using a Sawzall. She also loves adding twinkle lights to a display—any time of the year.

When it comes to updating displays, of course rearranging product is important so that even older product looks new. But what about rearranging your store layout? The slower summer months are a great time to try this.

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## Ceilings

Perhaps the most overlooked area of remodeling is the ceiling. Since the ceiling is not your store's focal point, it can be easy to ignore. But updating this area can make a big difference to the overall appearance of your store.

### *When it comes to ceiling treatments, the sky's the limit*

When it comes to ceiling treatments, the sky's the limit. Replace drop ceiling tiles with decorative ceiling tiles or remove them altogether. Leave the ceiling exposed or add architectural features like wood beams, crown moulding or bead board. The most noticeable and affordable change you can make, however, is to update lighting.

In the new store location, Linda says, "We have a lot of natural light but also put in bright LED fixtures that are high in the exposed rafters for a more modern and brighter look." The old store had ceiling tiles and fluorescent lighting.

If you don't know where to start, start small. There's room for improvement anywhere you look—from floor to ceiling. **CRA**

"We constantly repurpose displays and rearrange areas to give things a new look," Donna says. "If we are planning a reset of major floor displays, we usually plan it for July or August before the fall season kicks in, trying to keep in mind where we will put our Christmas displays."

In February 2019, Linda Muhlbach bought The Solid Rock in Kearney, NE, from the previous owners of 45 years and completely updated the store by moving from a 5,000-square-foot location to one about half that size.

"It has been a great move for us," Linda says. "The space is fresh and easier to shop and easier to stock!"

To make the space fresh, she used neutrals of black, white and light gray to make the product pop more. To make it easy to shop, Linda arranged the store purposefully. She said the previous location had so much space that customers didn't see everything they had to offer. Now shoppers are exposed to more items with less browsing. Linda strategically arranged the store with the gifts in the front and the books in the back so people coming in to shop for books have to go through the gift area to get there. She also designed the book area to be more of a "book nook" instead of a library look. "I wanted it to be reverent and modern at the same time," Linda says.

## SUCCESS STORY

Before our move last year, we had been in the same location for 47 years. It had been about 20 years since we did significant remodeling. We would change out a fixture or two, or move some around, but nothing big. We worked at keeping it fresh by always bringing new features into the gift selection. We also moved gifts to different locations within the store. It helped customers see the product with new eyes.

Now that we've moved, we kept most of the fixtures, but changed everything else. We got rid of the dirty white ceiling tile, florescent bulbs and the old carpet. I didn't want to spend money with a facelift, but God had a different idea. We painted the exposed ceiling blue. We got more contemporary lighting. And we left the floor stained concrete. Folks are raving over the new look. Our 20–30-year-old customer group is growing. That has to happen to stay in business. If we hadn't moved, even a little paint and better lighting would have made a huge difference.

Rick Lewis, Logos Book Store, Dallas, TX

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**HELP  
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Hiring Hacks and  
Staffing Workarounds

From fast food restaurants to high-end retail, if there's a sign on their door or a marquee along the road, they all seem to have these two words in common: Now Hiring.

In fact, there may even be a sign like that on your store's door right now. When it comes to hiring new employees, it's no secret that the struggle is real. And while summer can be a slower season and easier to get by with less staff, Christmas is right around the corner. But don't despair. Here are a few things you can do now so your team is ready for the hustle and bustle of fourth quarter.

### **Check with Your Local High School or Community College**

According to Lori Bowdoin of Blessings, A Christian Store in Prattville, AL, "Our very best consistent source for staffing is through our local high school vocational program."

This type of school offers students the opportunity to earn credit hours by gaining hands-on business experience in lieu of choosing an afternoon elective. Lori works with the school's program coordinator to request the type of student they need to interview and hire for their store. "We've done this for so many years that we can usually count on being able to hire who they send," Lori says. But if someone doesn't work out, the school handles it.

The students never open or close the store by themselves, but Lori says she has been able to train them to do most of the other responsibilities. They are quick learners, tech savvy and proficient in Microsoft programs. Because of that, Lori loves getting their help on special projects, such as social media, audio and visual projects, research, displays and input on store changes. Giving students these experiences benefits the store as well as the student. "I always try to give them opportunities to learn things that will help them in life, no matter what career they end up in," she adds.

At the end of the semester, Lori is required to do a student evaluation, which becomes part of their grade. "We have been extremely fortunate to have hard-working students that we just love, and we're always sad to see them go when they graduate," Lori says. "If you have a similar program at your local high school, I encourage you to go talk with them!"

According to Lori, many of these students continue to work during the summer or come back and work during their first and even second Christmas break. Before hiring them for the holidays, she always clarifies their requirements and confirms with their parents that they are able to meet these requirements. With a new school year starting soon, now is the time to talk with your local high school or community college about service hours or a work program that could lead to a little extra help during the holidays.

### **Hire Part-Time Workers**

If you're struggling to hire a full-time employee, consider hiring a part-time employee or two. The churches in your area are a good place to start. Someone who is recently

retired may still want a little extra income or a job to do, but with less hours.

Michelle Brown of Word of God Bible & Gift Store in Rineyville, KY, hired a part-time employee last Christmas. As a retiree, the part-timer did not want to work many hours, so Michelle scheduled her for 12 hours a week, three days a week. "We realized what a blessing it was to have an extra person here that we kept her on after Christmas," she says.

Summertime is a good time to take on a part-time staff member. The extra staff could allow an owner to take some much-needed time off from the store. Plus, it's easier to train a new hire when you have the time to do it properly. Subsequently, the training they receive now will prepare them for the busy season when they might be available for additional hours.

"We really struggle with employees during the holidays," Vicki Geist says. In November and December, business picks up for Cedar Springs Christian Store in Knoxville, TN, and Vicki says she needs to add three to four extra part-time people.

"One of the things that helps us is that we have a good core group all year round," she explains. "While we may have to back off of the hours they get during the summer months, we are able to increase those hours as much as the employee can give us as we get busier.

"My main recommendation is to start looking earlier than you may have in the past, because hiring employees is just not happening as fast as it used to," Vicki adds.

### **Incentivize Your Current Employees**

A referral from one of your current employees is one of the best ways to find a new staff member. Vicki offers her employees an incentive of \$50 cash if they hire someone that a staff member recommended. "We always encourage our employees to let anyone they know about available part-time jobs at our store and to talk it up," Vicki says. "I think that has helped with a couple of new employees over the years."

Or, if hiring more employees isn't possible, work with the staff you have. See if your current employees are able to work longer hours or more days. Consider holiday pay, a bonus or store perks as incentives for picking up extra shifts.

During the busy Christmas season, Lorraine Valk of Parable Christian Store of St. Joseph says, "My staff just knows that their help is needed and is willing to work extra hours."

But Lorraine makes it worth their while. A few years ago, they started something called the "12 treats of Christmas." Each employee signs up for a day or two and brings in a sweet treat like candy canes or cookies for the whole team to enjoy each day during their 12-day promotion.

### **Pray**

Certainly not last or least is pray that God will bring the right people to you. Here are two stories of answered prayer:

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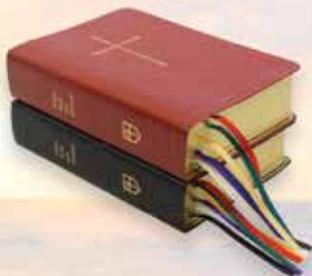
“In past years (pre-COVID), we put ‘Now Hiring’ signs in the store and on the doors, and we usually got quite a lot of applications. For our Christmas help, we wanted to have new people hired by September so that we felt they were trained and ready to go by the time we really needed them. Since COVID, that has not been the case. We put up signs last spring (because we were already short-handed going into the summer), and no applications came in. It has been really hard to find people that even want to work. Last year, we were really in a panic as late as October. So, I have to be honest, we all prayed daily that God would send us the perfect people to fill the spots that we needed. We ended up having three people in the store in a two-day period that told us they felt that God was telling them to come in and ask about a job, but they had just been putting it off. Two of the women really had the same story. They didn’t need a job, but they wanted to do something meaningful out of the home, and they were just perfect.”

-Vicki Geist, Cedar Springs Christian Store, Knoxville, TN

“Prayer has been successful. When I thought I would be in real trouble last fall, God brought two employees to us. One left a full-time job with benefits to work for us (I don’t offer benefits)—that can ONLY be God! I have had to close one of my locations a few times for lack of workers, but I just give it to God. If He wants this ministry/business open, then it will be!”

-Julie Jones, Choices, Newton, IA **CRA**

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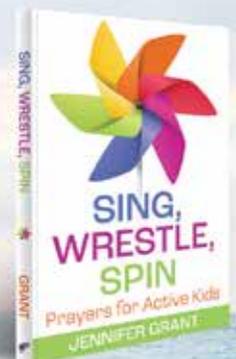
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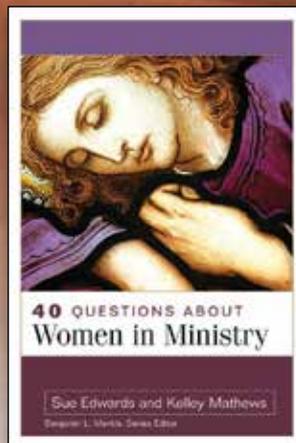
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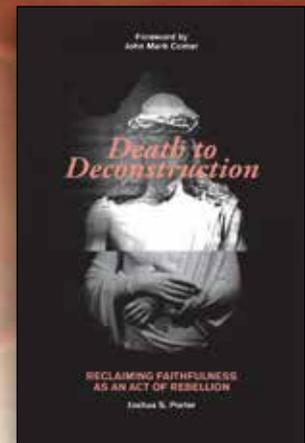
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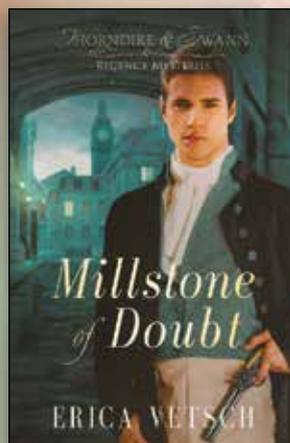
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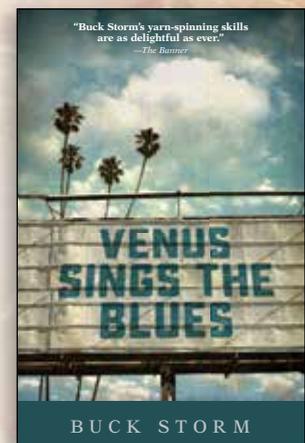
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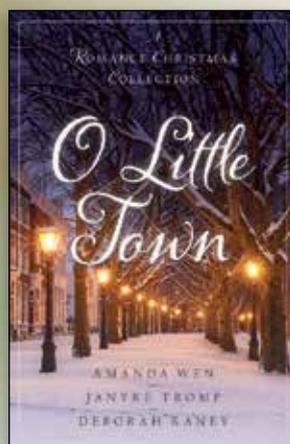
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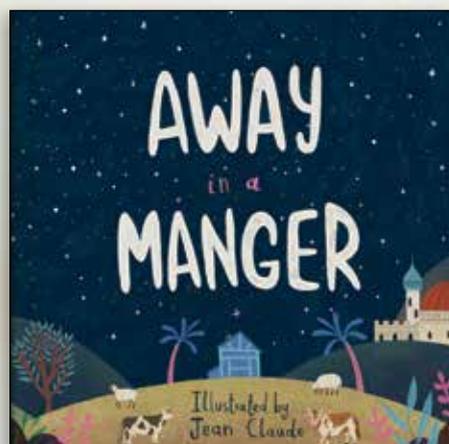
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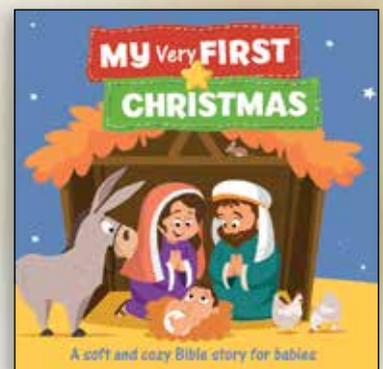
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The Bible has a lot to say about rest. Not surprising, it's quite different than what the world says. The world says, "Work harder, go further, don't quit." There's an expectation that if you aren't working all the time, you aren't working enough.

Work becomes a way to prove yourself or an achievement to pride yourself on, especially if you work more than other people do. It makes you feel needed and valued, because if you don't do it, who will?

But God commends time to rest from work; in fact, He commands it. The need to rest is so important that it made God's top 10. In Exodus 20:8-10a, God says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work."

Rest was created and instituted by God. After six days of creation, God Himself rested from the work He had done. Genesis 2:2-3 records, "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."

Knowing that God ordained time to rest from work should be reason enough to take a break, but research also validates this. A study revealed that an employee who took regular breaks throughout the day was more productive than an employee who worked non-stop.

Taking time off is important, whether that be daily, weekly or annually. Besides closing annually for holidays, many businesses are closed at least one day a week or even close early on certain days. In recent years, due to COVID or staffing shortages, some retailers were forced to adjust store hours. Yet, after cutting hours, many discovered that sales never dropped. Since then, most have been able to keep the store closed extra hours or even an extra day.

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# Rest for the Weary



Here are some suggestions from your fellow retailers about how you can make that happen too:

## Count the Cost

If you are a retailer, have you noticed a day of the week that is slower than others? Does it cost more to stay open six or seven days a week rather than closing for one or two days?

Darren Davenport has worked at Cross & Crown in Ayden, NC, for 28 years, while the store itself has been in ministry since 1873. Here's what Darren said about the benefits of determining the store's least busy times.

"About three years ago we made the decision to start closing on Saturdays (and Sundays), making the store open Monday through Friday. Surprisingly, that was our least busy day of the week and it helped simplify staffing fill-ins, so it made the most sense. And then, in 2021, we started a store-wide closure for two weeks every year for built-in vacation time off. After doing some analysis to determine our least busy times, we chose the last week of June and the week from Christmas Day to New Year's Day. While this may not be feasible for every store, it allows for a built-in break from the everyday demands of work."

## Hire Extra Help

If your store is always busy, hiring another employee can not only help with the workload but also give you the flexibility to take time off when needed.

After teaching in the school system, Ken Locklin, owner of Goodrubby Christian Bookstore in Casa Grande, AZ, said God led him to start working full-time at the bookstore in the fall of 2019. At that time, the store was in the red \$5,000. Ken and his wife, Cheryl, said they asked God to pay the bill since the store wasn't making money. According to Ken, "God has been faithful to provide for all our needs for the last three years, including orchestrating our youngest being born in April 2020 when we had to be curbside-only anyway!"

Last year, the Locklins were able to hire part-time employees to help with their busy schedule. They are a young family with a very active household of five kids, involved in their community. According to Chris Robinette, Executive Director of Voice of the Martyrs (VOM), Ken received nearly \$8,000 in 2021 by submitting over 520 response cards from customers who signed up to receive VOM's free monthly magazine subscription. The Locklins were able to use the money from VOM to hire another part-time staff member.

"I took my first vacation time between Christmas and New Year's this past year," Ken said. "I hadn't had any time away except a day here or there for the two and a half years that I had been at the store full-time. After hiring five part-time seasonal employees in October, we decided that we would take that week off, and it was great (even if I did go in every day for a short time)!"

Ken kept three of those part-time employees this year and said he has been able to come into the store later so his kids can finish home school in the mornings and so he can take Saturdays off to be with four of the kids on the baseball fields. "I have done a lot more at home with my family," Ken shared.



Plus, with extra employees, the store can stay open more days throughout the year, including all federal holidays, which the store previously closed on when Ken was working full-time, six days a week.

"While there have been a couple times that we had to close for an hour or two, we try incredibly hard not to," Ken said. "We have always tried to get someone to fill in if we can't be there so that the store can stay open."

## Make It a Priority

Taking time to rest from work shouldn't be seen as a privilege or an option. It should be a priority. According to Lorraine Valk of Parable Christian Store of St. Joseph, "Time away is necessary and important. We can't serve from an empty pot!" You need to be refreshed so that you can in turn refresh others.

Don't let excuses stop you. Kevin VanDuyne of Joy Christian Bookstore in Wabash, IN, said he came to the place where he realized, "The work never goes away. There will always be paperwork to do and orders to place and shelves to clean and product to move and product to receive." Do what you need to do to make it happen. Plan your time off, put it on the calendar, prepare your store, set clear boundaries and stick with them.

"[Taking time off] is a must for us, and we definitely get our day no matter what," Kevin said. "We changed our habits a few years ago and made 'our day.' We protect that day; and for us, we use Thursdays. Yes, the phone is still on, and we welcome the staff to call when in a pickle with a customer or computer issues. Consistency is the key; find your day and protect it. The Scripture says that the Lord rested on the seventh day. I follow His example." **CRA**



# Give Thanks

GRATITUDE COLLECTION

# STORE spotlight



## Good News Shoppe

As in life, there are often storms in Christian retail. For Leisha Doran, this was a literal storm when an EF4 tornado tore through her town in Mayfield, KY, just after 9 p.m. on December 10, 2021.

A little over three years prior, Leisha and her husband, Ben, purchased Good News Shoppe from one of the original owners. The store was founded nearly 40 years earlier in 1979 by a group of three friends. "It's really a God thing of how I got started in the Christian retail industry," Leisha says. Before owning a bookstore, Leisha worked at the local electric company; however, with a 4-year-old boy at home and multiple miscarriages, she began praying for something that would allow her to spend more time with her family.

Leisha mentioned to someone that she would love to own a store like the Good News Shoppe, and it just so happened that someone knew the store was for sale. At the time, Leisha was pregnant with her second little boy and on maternity leave. "It was like everything just fell into place without trying to make it happen," she explains. So she and her husband bought the store.



“It was the wildest thing I had ever done,” Leisha admits. “But my husband and I felt like God was leading us there and He would take care of us. And boy has He taken care of us.”

God provided the support she needed to learn how to run a store with no retail experience whatsoever. In fact, three of her four current staff members are previous employees, including one who has been with the store for over 20 years, as well as the previous owner who still works one day a week.

Since first opening its doors, Good News Shoppe has grown exponentially. “We try to carry as much as we can to make it easier for churches and Christians to get the resources they need to grow their faith,” Leisha explains. The store’s top-selling products are Bibles, books, inspirational gifts, bereavement and T-shirts. Customers love that the store does free gift wrapping, delivers to local funeral homes and imprints Bibles. They also love the personalized service they receive.

“Good News Shoppe is known for spreading God’s Word and making people feel genuinely loved,” Leisha shares. “We want everyone to feel like family when they walk in, so we try to learn their names and get to know them. We know you can’t get that from online. We feel like that is what brings people back.”

The Word of God and that feeling of family and community are what remained, even when the store itself was destroyed.

Leisha was at her parents’ house when she found out that a tornado had hit Mayfield. At the time, she did not have power or cell service. When text messages finally started coming through, she learned the store had been destroyed. “I was heartbroken by the news, and it was a total shock,” Leisha recalls.

When Leisha was able to visit the site, she noticed that amidst the rubble, some items seemed untouched. “The Bibles were still in their place, just like you would have come into the store ready to pick up one,” she shares. “I totally believe that God wanted everyone to know that God’s Word still stands!”

Although the Bibles were not in sellable condition, the store donated them to two churches to hand out to families who came in for supplies. “It’s our prayer that we were able to plant a seed, especially during a time that was so tragic for so many,” she says.

While Leisha and her family were devastated by this tragedy, they were also encouraged. “I have been so humbled by so many of you and the generosity and love that has been shown to us by people who don’t even know us,” she shares.

“Honestly, the easy thing to do in this situation would have been to close our doors and move on to something else; however, I did not feel like God was done with us yet,” Leisha says. “Our business thankfully was thriving before the tornado, and I felt like our community needed the Good News Shoppe more than ever.”

After the tornado, Leisha searched for several days for a new location, but other businesses were doing the same. Leisha

and her husband prayed as they grew anxious about finding anything that was available. “About an hour after crying with my husband, we got a call that a spot had opened up,” Leisha says. “God is good!”

“I pretty much knew I wanted it without looking,” Leisha recalls. “It was a big space with so much potential.”

Nearly 3,000 square feet, Good News Shoppe is now located in the Mayfield Plaza with several other businesses. According to Leisha, the Plaza was almost empty and now it has been brought back to life. With her new neighbors, the store is gaining new customers, including people from other states. “So far the foot traffic has been wonderful, and it has truly helped people find us again.”



Moving to a new location did have some challenges. While they were able to salvage several items from their backroom, that meant a lot of cleaning and sorting through all the products. This took longer than they anticipated. They also had to design a new layout, paint new fixtures and enter hundreds of new products into their inventory. But the new location has also allowed the staff to explore other ways of displaying product, putting more inventory out and keeping less in the stockroom. The store now has a new vibe with fresh paint, new floors and bright lighting that they hope will attract even younger customers.

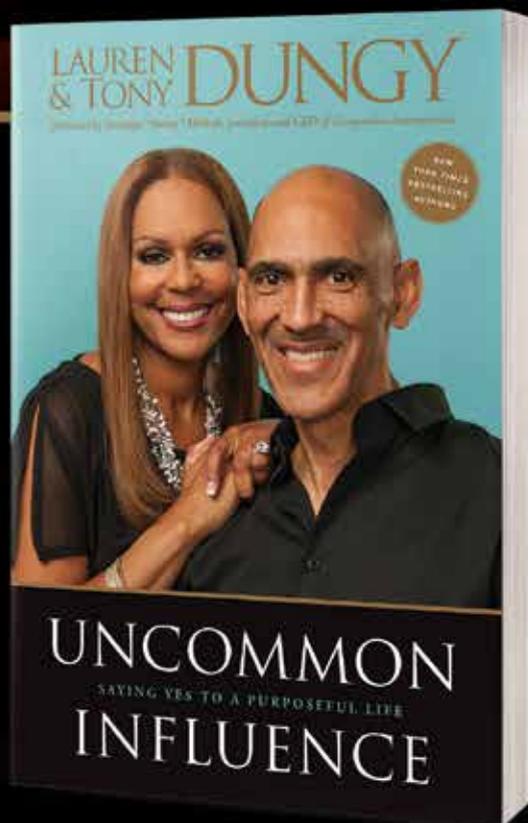
Their goal was to be in before Easter, and the store re-opened on April 11, 2022—six days before Easter and four months after the tornado.

“I could not have done it without my people,” Leisha shares. “Family, friends and my sweet staff stepped in without hesitation and helped us recover.”

In her three and a half years as owner, Leisha has survived a pandemic and a tornado. “I have been shown so much love from God and how He never leaves us,” she says. God has truly helped Good New Shoppe weather the storms of life. **CRA**



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