

# Coptics in Clarksville



101st Airborne Division soldiers Cpl. Joseph Dunlap, left, and Sgt. Robert Saffel help Spc. Daniel Nakitare after his MRAP hit an IED while on patrol in Afghanistan in February 2013. The Leaf-Chronicle's Greg Williamson captured the image during an embed assignment with the 101st. THE LEAF-CHRONICLE/GREG WILLIAMSON

## Awards

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» **Best Spot News Coverage:** "Brigade to be cut," by Philip Grey. Excellent sources led Grey to break regional and national news on the plan to eliminate 4th Brigade Combat Team and to the earliest, most accurate numbers for the net impact at Fort Campbell.

» **Best News Photograph:** "IED blast stops convoy in Afghanistan," by Greg Williamson. Williamson was on assignment with the 101st Airborne Division in Afghan-

istan and captured this image after the convoy he was riding in struck an IED.

» **Best Education Reporting:** Compilation of staff education reports on issues ranging from rezoning and bus policies to DoDEA teacher furloughs and Common Core.

The Leaf-Chronicle also won the following:

» Third place in Sports Photograph (Robert Smith), News Reporting (Tavia Green), Editorials (Chris Smith), Public Service (Philip Grey, Tavia Green, Lester Black, Chris Smith) and Website (Alane Megna);

» Fourth place in Sports Coverage (George Robinson, Luke Thompson), Personal Humor Column (Karen Parr-Moody) and Make-Up and Appearance.

» Fifth place in News Photograph (Robert Smith), Headline Writing (Chris Smith), Business Coverage (Jimmy Settle), News Reporting (Mark Hicks and Chris Smith) and Single Editorial (Chris Smith).

The entries from 80 Tennessee newspapers were judged this year by Arkansas Press Association. UT has co-sponsored this annual contest since 1940.

## Parks & Rec's Back to School Splash currently full

By Bethany Benjamin  
Clarksville Parks & Recreation

Due to an overwhelming response, the second annual Back to School Splash has reached registration capacity. The Back to School Splash will

ers, at New Providence and Beachaven Pools on Aug. 2, from 6 to 8 p.m.

This year's event is sponsored by CDE Lightband, Altra Federal Credit Union, Agero and 5 Star Radio Group.

Anyone wishing to

mer long at any of our five public pool locations, as well as the Parks & Recreation main office located at 102 Public Square.

For more details on The Back to School Splash, please contact the



The St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church. On the left on the first row is Father Youhanna Ghebranious, and on the right is visiting priest Father Markos Zaghloul. PHOTO BY NANCY SALYER

## Coptic

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that created the Greek or Eastern Orthodox Church in 1054. The tradition precedes the founding of Islam in 632.

### 'Father John'

The Rev. Youhanna Ghebranious serves as pastor of St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, which is based in Nashville. There are six Coptic congregations in Nashville. Adel Salama serves as the Clarksville contact.

Ghebranious, affectionately called Father John, explained, "There are between 12,000 and 15,000 Coptic Christians in Nashville. The greatest number of Copts are in Egypt, where we are 10 percent of the total population of 85 million. We are a distinct minority, and we continue to be subjected to violent persecution and discrimination."

"We have 11 families in our congregation that add up to 55 members. Having a monthly worship service in Clarksville is something we have talked about for some time. Because of Pastor Stewart and his congregation, we now have a home here where we can worship."

To a casual observer, a Coptic Christian worship service is similar to an Eastern Orthodox service. The priest wears vestments, there is incense used and Holy Communion is central to the service. Egyptian is the language used. All but one member of the congregation are Egyptian. The other member is from Eritrea.

Father John wants to educate people to Coptic traditions. "We are followers of Jesus Christ. He is our Lord and Savior and provides us with everything we need. Our style of worship reflects our culture and traditions," he stated.

"Copts are the forgotten part of the Christian story. Yet our founder was one of the original 12 apostles. Monastic traditions began in Egypt with St. Anthony and, from there, spread throughout the Middle East and into Europe."

### Persecution

Among church leaders and media representatives, it is generally agreed that today the Coptic Christians are the most persecuted Christians on earth.

"In Egypt, we are blamed for everything. The Muslim Brotherhood blames the Copts for the overthrow of former-President Morsi. We have lived in harmony

more than they hate other Christians. The ISIS terrorists are the same way."

Active persecutions are taking place in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Turkey. At least 40 Coptic churches were burned following the fall of President Morsi in 2013.

"Abdel el-Sissi, the new Egyptian president, is tolerant of us and has assured us he will stop the killings and the burning of our churches," said Father John. "We are a people of peace and wish to live in harmony with people everywhere."

### Living in harmony

"We are very grateful to the people of Bethel and to Pastor Stewart for letting us worship here. I hope some Bethel members will attend one of our services and experience our faith with us. We want to teach others and also learn from others."

For Salyer's part, "This is a great opportunity for our congregation. We already share our Christian faith, and by working together, we will learn to share our cultures and customs."

To learn more about Coptic Christians, visit the website of the Diocese of the Southern U.S. at [www.suscopts.org](http://www.suscopts.org).







**The St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church. On the left on the first row is Father Youhanna Ghebranious, and on the right is visiting priest Father Markos Zaghloul. PHOTO BY NANCY SALYER**



ist Church, c/o Ruth Rawlings, 2632 Rawlings Road, Woodlawn, TN 37191. 645-4188.

#### T.O.P.S (Take Off Pounds Sensibly)

**What:** Weight loss support group

**When:** Every Thursday 10:45 a.m. Weigh-in 30 minutes prior to meeting.

**Where:** New Providence UMC, 1317 Fort Campbell Blvd.

**Contact:** 931-217-4457

#### Free Bible courses

**What:** Tuition-free courses in the major fields of Biblical research. Ten online courses are also available.

**When:** 1 1/2-hour courses weekly

**Where:** All Nations Bible Study Center, 1186 Ft. Campbell Blvd.

**Register:** 648-8844 or [www.studythescritures.net](http://www.studythescritures.net)

#### Reformers Unanimous Addiction Program

**What:** A Christian recovery program with a weekly support group designed to assist people in their recovery from any and all addictive behaviors.

**When:** 7 p.m. every Friday

**Where:** Bible Baptist Church, 3102 Prospect Circle

**Contact:** 931-233-0519

#### Crisis Center updates

If your church is doing something for the unemployed, homeless or working poor in Clarksville, please email your church info to [Crisis211@bellsouth.net](mailto:Crisis211@bellsouth.net) or call 648-1000. This information is needed to update our resource manual.

Road next to Cumberland Heights Elementary School. Edwards said the station replaces a previous station in that area that succumbed to fire last year.

He anticipates having the newly constructed, \$750,000 Station 23 fully operational next week.

"This station will provide lo-

and children.

"This zone has historically produced 3 to 4 percent of our emergency call volume for the county," Edwards said. The coverage area for Station 23 extends from Riverside Drive to Palmyra, and over to Salem Road and Martha's Chapel Road.

Station 23 was designed by the local Violette Architecture, while Hopkinsville, Kentucky-based Southwinds Contractors built it.

Bowers was pleased Friday with the final product. "It's really nice, and being at this location, it will absolutely make

Cumberland Heights a safer school. Also, it will be close to the new RichEllen Park," she said.

Jimmy Settle, 245-0247  
Business editor  
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#### FAITH & VALUES

## Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian offers sanctuary to Coptic Christians

By Tim Parrish  
For The Leaf-Chronicle

CLARKSVILLE, Tenn. — What started out as a leisurely Saturday afternoon at Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Sango for Pastor Stewart Salyer ended with an opportunity to demonstrate the ecumenical spirit that Christian denominations speak of so often. For Salyer, though, this would not be something to talk about. It would be something that could be done.

A young man with his wife and child spotted Salyer in the church parking lot and pulled in to speak with him. The man, Matthew Jahphet, inquired about the possibility of holding Christian worship services at Bethel once a month on a Saturday morning.

From that conversation came several more conversations, including Salyer talking with the church Session members. Sharing a church facility with another congregation is done all the time across America, even when the congregations are from differing traditions. But this was going to be different.



Father Youhanna Ghebranious, pastor of St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church, left, with the Rev. Stewart Salyer, pastor of Bethel Cumberland Presbyterian Church. PHOTO BY NANCY SALYER

#### Coptic Christians

On Saturday, July 5, St. Mary Coptic Orthodox Church held its first monthly worship service at Bethel. Coptic Christians are among the earliest Christians to form after the death of Jesus Christ.

The faith tradition traces its roots to the years between 42 and 62 A.D. It was the Apostle St. Mark who founded Coptic

Christianity after going to Egypt following the death of Christ. Coptic means "Egypt." The name has survived and is no different than using the words American Christians or French Christians.

Copts, as they are referred to, are not part of Roman Catholicism. They split from Rome in 325 A.D., long before the split

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## Leaf-Chronicle wins four first-place awards

Investigative, breaking news, education reporting earn top nods

By Chris Smith  
Leaf-Chronicle

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Strong investigative and breaking news reporting helped lead The Leaf-Chronicle to four first-place awards in the 2014 University of Tennessee/Tennessee Press Association Newspaper Contest.

The Leaf-Chronicle picked up the following first-place plaques at Friday's awards banquet in Nashville for work published in 2013.

» **Investigative Reporting:** "Suicide in the Ranks," by Philip Grey and Tavia Green. This series examined 17 Army suicide reports at Fort Campbell, finding that while there were clusters of causes for soldier suicides, wartime deployment was not an overriding factor.

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<p>Tom Wells</p>	<p><b>Total Interior Home Remodeling</b></p> <p><b>Elegant Kitchens and Baths for 44 Years</b></p> <p><b>Veteran - Family Owned and Operated Since 1969</b></p> <p><b>Wells Woodwork Co. 3130 Old Sango Rd.</b></p> <p><b>931 358-3062</b></p> <p>A+ Rating    Certified</p>	<p>Sandy</p>
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SENIOR EDITOR/LOCAL NEWS: CHRIS SMITH, [CHRIS.SMITH@THELEAFCHRONICLE.COM](mailto:CHRIS.SMITH@THELEAFCHRONICLE.COM), 931.245.0282

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