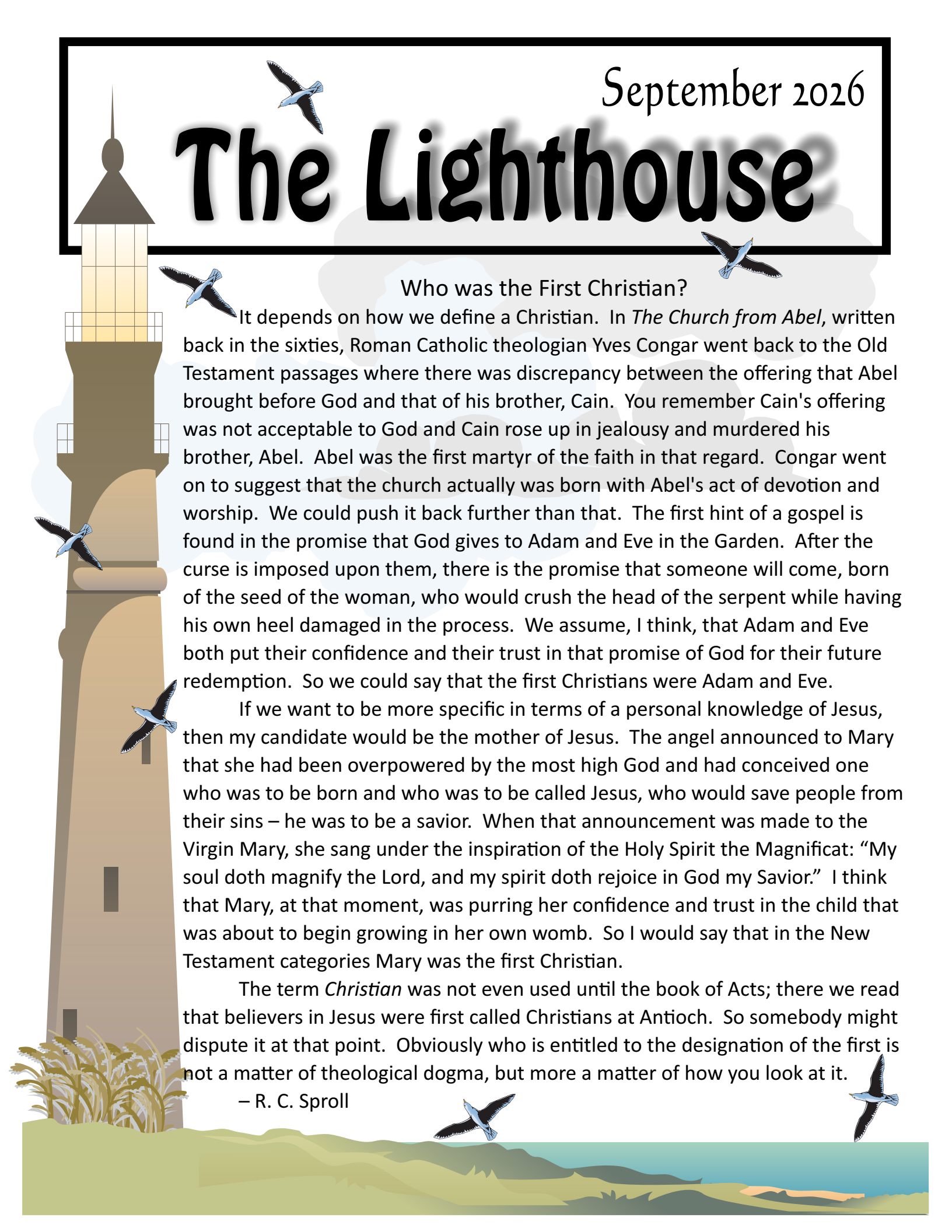




September 2026

The Lighthouse

Who was the First Christian?

It depends on how we define a Christian. In *The Church from Abel*, written back in the sixties, Roman Catholic theologian Yves Congar went back to the Old Testament passages where there was discrepancy between the offering that Abel brought before God and that of his brother, Cain. You remember Cain's offering was not acceptable to God and Cain rose up in jealousy and murdered his brother, Abel. Abel was the first martyr of the faith in that regard. Congar went on to suggest that the church actually was born with Abel's act of devotion and worship. We could push it back further than that. The first hint of a gospel is found in the promise that God gives to Adam and Eve in the Garden. After the curse is imposed upon them, there is the promise that someone will come, born of the seed of the woman, who would crush the head of the serpent while having his own heel damaged in the process. We assume, I think, that Adam and Eve both put their confidence and their trust in that promise of God for their future redemption. So we could say that the first Christians were Adam and Eve.

If we want to be more specific in terms of a personal knowledge of Jesus, then my candidate would be the mother of Jesus. The angel announced to Mary that she had been overpowered by the most high God and had conceived one who was to be born and who was to be called Jesus, who would save people from their sins – he was to be a savior. When that announcement was made to the Virgin Mary, she sang under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit the Magnificat: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Savior.” I think that Mary, at that moment, was putting her confidence and trust in the child that was about to begin growing in her own womb. So I would say that in the New Testament categories Mary was the first Christian.

The term *Christian* was not even used until the book of Acts; there we read that believers in Jesus were first called Christians at Antioch. So somebody might dispute it at that point. Obviously who is entitled to the designation of the first is not a matter of theological dogma, but more a matter of how you look at it.

– R. C. Sproll

2026 Missions Conference!

September 25 – 27

This month is our Missions Conference! We'll be hearing from Dr. Jody Collinge and Jon & Karen Schmidt. You may have read about each of them in Meet the Missionaries articles in previous newsletters, both reprinted in this issue. Here's the conference schedule:

Friday, September 25th

- The Go Team (Missions Committee) will host the missionaries at a dinner.

Saturday, September 26th

- Brunch at the church at 10:00 a.m. Each missionary will speak about 30 to 45 minutes.
- Two different families will host one of the missionaries for dinner Saturday evening. [We're looking for volunteers](#) – please contact David Allen or Kim Clark to volunteer. We encourage you to ask others to join you.

Sunday, September 27th

- Both missionaries will be sharing with the children & youth during Sunday School.
- Both missionaries will be introduced during the morning worship service and be given an opportunity for a short introduction.
- Luncheon at the church with each missionary given an opportunity to speak (30 to 45 minutes). Please bring a dish to share!
- During the evening worship service, each missionary will be given an opportunity to share prayer concerns for their ministry, and we will have a time of prayer for them.

Please join us and get to know our missionaries!

Meet the Missionaries:

Jody Collinge

We first met Jody Collinge when a team from our church was on a mission trip to the Mexican border in the early 1990s. Our whole team had a great rapport with her right from the start. She relates well to all people, especially children and those with disabilities.

Dr. Jody Collinge has had a very interesting career. In her words “Through the experience of a benign brain tumor, the Lord led me into medicine as a way to serve him. Later, after I worked for a few months at an orphanage in the Philippines, he called me to be a doctor cross-culturally.” She became a pediatrician and practiced in Saratoga Springs, New York, until the Lord called her to be a medical missionary in Mexico. She was the Area Coordinator for Mexico with Medical Ambassadors International and partnering with Mission to the World when we met her on a mission trip to the Mexican border.



Being a physician, partnering with Community Health Evangelism (CHE) was a natural for Jody.

CHE is a wholistic strategy that combines evangelism and discipleship with community-based development. Their goal is to see individuals, families, and communities transformed by Christ. They work as a network with churches, agencies and NGOs in about 126 countries around the world.

For many years Jody lived in Zihuatanejo, Mexico facilitating the development of the CHE training curriculum, and also Children's CHE, or community health evangelism with children. Much of her time is spent traveling and giving training seminars for Children's CHE.

With Children's CHE, kids learn health and social skills, and they become followers of Christ. Then the children share what they have learned with their families, friends and neighbors.

Jody was also involved in several ministries in Zihuatanejo—in children's clubs, with a small orphanage, and at a garbage dump. She really had a ministry with children living in a garbage dump!

You may have heard of Zihuatanejo through the movie Shawshank Redemption. Zihuatanejo is located north of Acapulco on the Pacific coast of Mexico.

Recently Jody moved to Texas, living in a cabin at the ministry base of the Christian Health Service Corps for most of the year, but she'll be coming back to Zihuatanejo to live during the winter.

During a missions conference at our church in 2011, we had a fun event called Cooking with Missionaries. Each of the missionaries cooked something from their mission field. Jody's contribution was a melon smoothie. Here's the recipe:

Agua de Melón

Choose fresh melons and fruits from the market.

cantaloupe

honeydew

other available melons or fruit

bananas

ice cubes

Peel, cut, and freeze bananas. Keeping frozen bananas on hand makes it convenient for making smoothies quickly.

Scoop cut melons into blender with bananas. Add ice cubes and blend until smooth and icy. Drink and enjoy.

-- Jody Collinge

Meet the Missionaries:

Jon and Karen Schmidt

Jon and Karen have been part of our mission outreach since the 1990's. When we first knew them, they were aviation missionaries in Peru with SAMAIR (the aviation ministry of South American Mission). We met them when Jon bought an airplane from Parker Rhett, Charlotte's husband (that was Parker's vocation – Parker Rhett Aircraft Sales). Jon stayed for a bit while Parker's shop installed a STOL (Short Take Off and Landing) kit on the airplane and we got to know him. Jon flew that airplane from Diamondhead, MS all the way to Peru.

Jon and Karen spent more than 22 years as aviation missionaries in Peru. Jon is a pilot, A&P (Airframe and Powerplant) mechanic, a certified flight instructor, and a check pilot (certifies others).

Jon and Karen have many fascinating stories of aviation ministry in the jungles of Peru. Jon often used runways that were too short, but on a hillside. He would land uphill using gravity to stop, and takeoff downhill to get enough speed to fly. They would move people, animals, even bags of cement, doing whatever was necessary to help spread the Gospel of Jesus throughout the jungle.

Jon and Karen and their kids lived on a mission airport on a lake because one of the airplanes they used was a float plane. Their kids used to swim in the lake with piranhas (yes, really!). He said the fish had a bad rap. I don't want to find out!



After their kids were grown, they were called to help train the next generation of aviation missionaries. Jon is now a senior flight instructor and mentor at Moody Aviation in Spokane, Washington. He loves training the next generation of aviation missionaries. Among other things, he teaches mountain flying and leads the students on long arduous cross-country flights.

Through the years Jon and Karen have been to our church several times for missions conferences. If you go to visit Charlotte Rhett, you can see a tapestry made from Peruvian Alpaca wool hanging on her wall. It was a gift from Jon and Karen for one of the times they stayed with her during a missions conference.

Please pray for continued health and safety for Jon and Karen, and for their encouragement of the next generation of mission aviators.



Jon & Karen

BIRTHDAYS for SEPTEMBER

Fran Handel 1st
Chris Smith 5th
Michael Venning 7th
Phil Pennington 11th
Rachael Venning 12th
Tammy Turney 20th
Ashley VanderKooy 20th
Peter Blakeney 27th

Dates to Remember for September

September 2 Wednesday evening activities will resume

September 2 Women's leadership team meets at 5:30 p.m. in the church library

September 5 Men's breakfast at 8:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall

September 6 Communion

September 7 Men's Bible Study at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor

September 10 Ladies Circle at 11 a.m. at the home of Fran Bagby

September 14 Session Meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the church

September 19 Women's Bible Study and Brunch in the Fellowship Hall, starts at 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

September 20 Meet the Pastor Sunday after the morning worship service in the Parlor

September 21 Deacon's Meeting at 5:45 p.m. at the church

September 21 Men's Bible Study at 6:30 p.m. in the parlor

September 25-27 Missions Conference

September 27 Monthly Luncheon after the worship service, please bring a dish to share



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