



News Release

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**Author and native Topekan to deliver program on Rev. Dr. Charles Sheldon
Program set for Feb. 12 at Old Prairie Town – site of Charles Sheldon Study**

TOPEKA, KAN. – As funds are raised for an effort to restore the Charles Sheldon Study at Old Prairie Town a Topeka native journalist and author plans to deliver a program on one of the most notable chapter's of Rev. Sheldon's life. Laird Kelly will present "Reverend Sheldon and his Christian Newspaper, the Topeka Daily Capital" at 7 p.m., Feb. 12 in the Preston-Hale Room of the Ward-Meade mansion at Old Prairie Town.

According to Kelly, Sheldon often included newsmen in his stories, among them a character in his best-seller "In His Steps." In the book, a fictional newspaper editor pledges to produce his paper "As Jesus would do." Certain types of ads and stories would not appear in the paper, even if it meant a loss of revenue.

In late 1899, the publisher of the Topeka Daily Capital offered Rev. Sheldon full control of his newspaper for one week. Promoters set up a revenue-sharing scheme to have Sunday Schools throughout the country sell subscriptions. Circulation went from 16,000 to an estimated 376,000 for the week. Reporters came from around the country to see how Rev. Sheldon would get "typical rough-hewn, hard-drinking reporters" to produce a truly Christian newspaper.

The Sheldon Study at Old Prairie Town is all that remains of the home in Topeka where Sheldon lived. Closed to visitors until recently, the study is being renovated into a museum state so that guests to Old Prairie Town may learn more about the local minister whose book popularized turned the phrase "What Would Jesus Do" into a worldwide movement. Funds for the renovation are being raised through the Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Foundation www.sheldonslegacylives.com.

The study's roof and cedar shake shingles have been replaced and an HVAC system has been added. Still needed are an electrical system upgrade, new interior walls and a ceiling,

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tuck pointing the chimney, window repairs, refinishing the wood floors, a new door and screen door and an ADA accessible wood ramp. The needed items total \$31,500. Museum display cases also need to be added to preserve some of Rev. Sheldon's artifacts and an endowment is being established to preserve the study and Rev. Sheldon's legacy.

Kelly is in the process of writing a book tentatively titled, "Liberal Kansas" about the time when Kansas was a seed-bed for liberal, progressive and even socialist thought. He holds a journalism degree from Northwestern University and has worked most of his career publishing news and educational programs in the field of medicine. He lives with his wife in New York City.

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Shawnee County Parks + Recreation includes more than 50 miles of trails, 2,625 acres of parks and 320 annual days of sporting activities. In addition, the department offers recreation programs, educational programs and golf. A combination of tax dollars, user fees and private donations enables Shawnee County Parks and Recreation to offer parks, sporting and aquatic facilities with state-of-the-art features, and beautiful, nationally recognized gardens.