



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

Ralph Darby Williams (1902-1982), his wife, Jewyl, and baby, Owen, arrived in El Salvador on Christmas Eve 1929 as the first AG missionaries in Central America. As the Pentecostal church grew over their 50-year tenure, Williams helped to develop the basis of the indigenous church principle that has driven the success of AG missions endeavors.

In the early 1900s, the Pentecostal message came to El Salvador. One believer, Francisco Arbizu, became very concerned about the state of the church. He met with U.S. AG leaders asking them to send missionaries to guide his people.

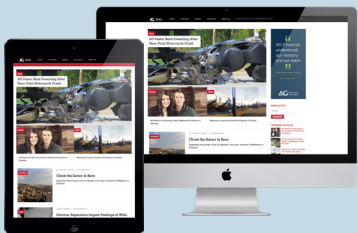
The Williams family responded to this call and met with Arbizu on Christmas

in 1929, in Santa Ana. After visiting the fledgling churches, Williams realized that many more missionaries would be needed, but where would they come from?

Williams prayed and the Lord revealed that they needed to raise up the Salvadorian believers to reach their neighbors, pastor their churches, and send their own workers to the unreached villages around them. The principle of building indigenous churches through missions was born.

Read more about Williams' first thoughts on arriving in El Salvador on page 10 of the April 12, 1930, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/april121930.

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SUNDAY, APRIL 15, 2018

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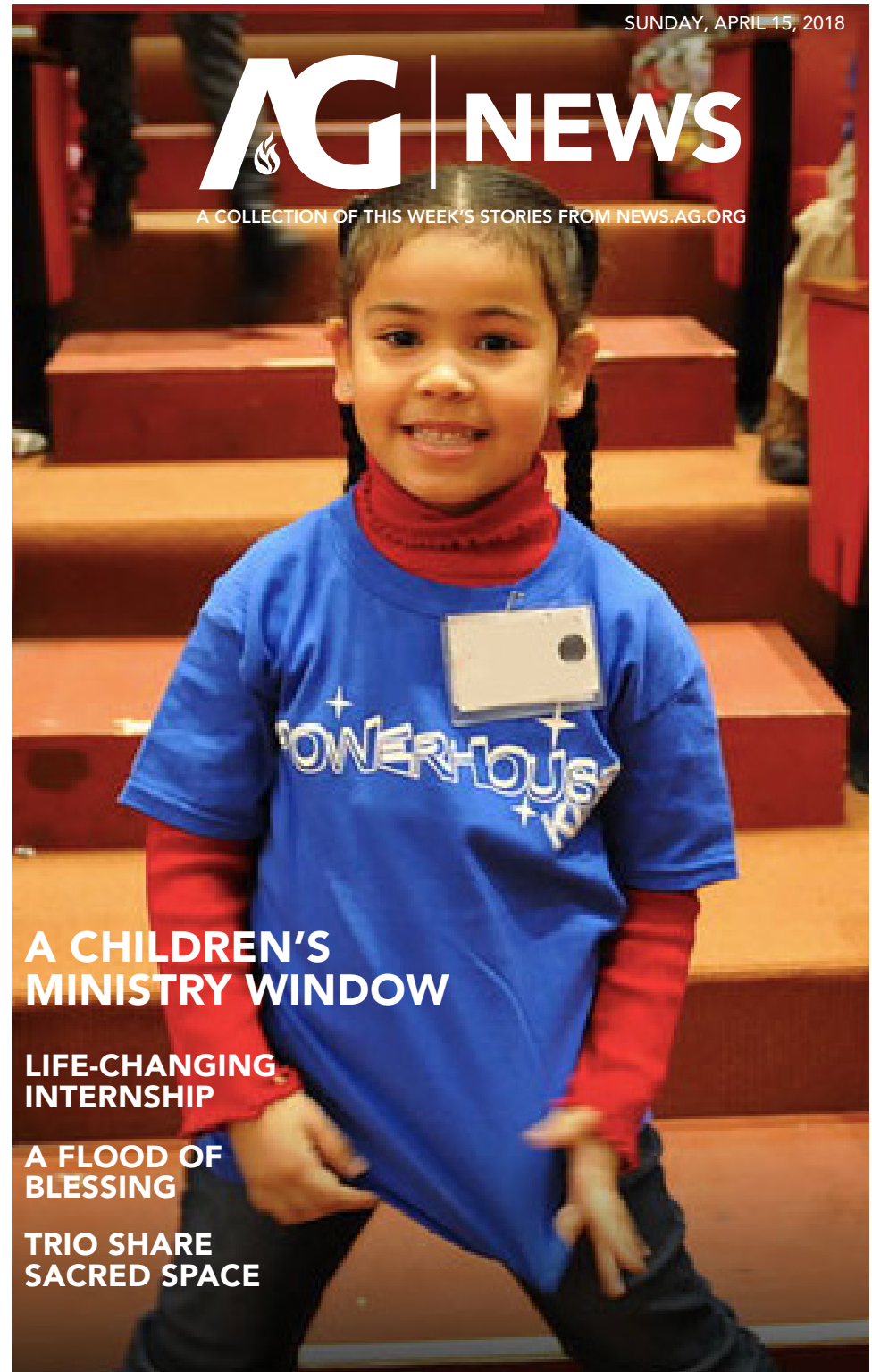
A COLLECTION OF THIS WEEK'S STORIES FROM [NEWS.AG.ORG](http://news.ag.org)

A CHILDREN'S MINISTRY WINDOW

LIFE-CHANGING
INTERNSHIP

A FLOOD OF
BLESSING

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SACRED SPACE





A CHILDREN'S MINISTRY WINDOW

BY DEANN ALFORD

Emilio De La Cruz saw a vision of two fields. Workers toiled long, hard hours in the first rocky and infertile field in an effort to prepare the ground for plowing before sowing seed. But the second field appeared clean, fertile, and ready. Wherever the sower planted seeds, that field yielded abundant fruit.

"The Lord told me these are the children," says De La Cruz, 60, superintendent of the AG's Hispanic Southwest District, which encompasses Arizona. "We've been focusing on the other field, reaching broken and damaged lives, being so passionate to reach the lost that we didn't put resources into reaching the children."

De La Cruz wanted to change the paradigm and make children a priority in all the district's churches.

"Across the board, children have to come first," he says. "We must invest staff and finances first into our children. Some of us have to be passionate and carry that torch."

To that end, since 2016 he's championed throughout the district

the 4-14 Window movement developed by Flushing, New York-based AG Promise Church. That congregation, led by Nam Soo Kim, aims to reach children with the gospel during the receptive ages of 4 to 14. Promise Church's Powerhouse Kids children's ministry ministers to 635 children each Saturday, offering classes in choir, piano, guitar, violin, drama, dance, knitting, pottery, soccer, basketball, ping pong, taekwondo, and arts and crafts.

By reaching the children, Powerhouse also impacts their parents, who may receive counseling in English or Spanish, and take classes in English as a second language. The Powerhouse program proved to be the right match for the Southwest District, which needed ongoing focused outreach to children rather than one-off events.

This year New Life Covenant, the church De La Cruz pastors in the Phoenix suburb of Avondale, launched Powerhouse once a month. Meanwhile,

TRIO SHARE SACRED SPACE

BY GUYLA ARMSTRONG

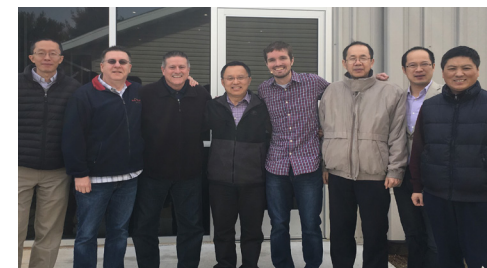
New Life Church in Springfield, Missouri, has a history of sharing its facilities. Kevin Babin, U.S. missionary with Intercultural Ministries Deaf Culture, has been pastoring Ozark Mountain Deaf Church AG since 2001, meeting at New Life's facility the entire time. Both groups work together to ensure that each can use the facility as needed. OMDCAg meets Sunday afternoons after New Life's Sunday morning services, and holds a Thursday night service as well.

"Relationship is the key to sharing space," says Babin. "The staff at NLC place a high priority in partnering with us in reaching this unreached people group."

James H. Griffin, executive pastor of the predominantly white NLC, says it makes sense.

"If we can share resources and space, it furthers God's mission in the world."

In 2015, New Life added a second partner. Springfield Chinese Home of Christ (SCHC) began meeting during the Sunday morning services at New



Life soon after four families spent many months praying together.

The leaders agree that dividing time at a facility requires that expectations be discussed, clearly defined, and written down.

"Sacrifice and concessions have to be made by all parties involved," says Griffin. "If your church is not prepared to be flexible and have grace, then another congregation is probably not a good idea."

NLC and SCHC recently collaborated to build a new youth center on the church property. SCHC uses this new facility for morning worship while children from the congregation join New Life's groups. NLC's youth use the facility on Sunday evenings.

THE ABCs OF SALVATION

ACCEPT that you are a sinner, and God's punishment for your sin is death and separation from God forever.

BELIEVE that Jesus paid God's price for your sin when He died on the cross.

CONFESS "Jesus, I believe You are who the Bible and history declares You are – the Son of God. I humble myself and surrender to You. Forgive me. Make me spiritually whole. Change my life. Amen."

A LIFE-CHANGING INTERNSHIP

BY ASHLEY B. GRANT

After walking through a difficult time in her life, Mary D. Lyons knew she needed to find a community where she could heal. Not long afterward, Lyons discovered the Chi Alpha campus ministry at Columbus State University in Georgia, where she studied journalism.

"They accepted me and all of my brokenness, and basically loved me back to life." Lyons knew she wanted to be involved long term in Chi Alpha. In a few short months, in the fall of 2014, Lyons became the first Georgia Chi Alpha intern.

Since August 2017, Lyons, who is a missionary associate, has been interim director for Georgia Southern's Chi Alpha.

For the past school year, Lyons has been pouring into student leaders by having consistent one-on-one discipleship, holding weekly leadership meetings, and coaching students to become biblical leaders.

"I want to simply encourage these kids to live a life that God wants them to lead," says Lyons, 27. She has given students a lot of latitude in trying new approaches to help minority students integrate their ethnic background into services and meetings via mime, dance, singing, and so forth.

After she concludes her interim position, Lyons says she feels called to pioneer a Chi Alpha chapter at Spelman College, a historically black



school in Atlanta for women. In recent years, Chi Alpha has more aggressively seeking ways to be a presence at some of the nation's 106 Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU).

U.S. missionary Belkis Lehmann, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries diversity specialist, says the group has established chapters at a pair of HBCU campuses: Xavier University in New Orleans and Virginia Union University in Richmond. In addition, nascent groups have started at Winston Salem State University in North Carolina and Texas Southern University in Houston.

EXHIBIT HONORS NATIVE AMERICAN EVANGELISTS

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

A tall, silent Native American in traditional Cherokee garb is greeting visitors for the month of April at the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center museum, located in the AG national offices in Springfield, Missouri.

The Native American is actually a mannequin, and he is attired in the leather and bead outfit that Cherokee evangelist James F. Pepper (1905-1996) occasionally wore during his lengthy ministry in the Assemblies of God.

The display is part of a new exhibit honoring Native American AG evangelists. Featured photographs, revival posters, and other artifacts come from the ministries of Rodger Cree, George G. Effman, Charlie Lee, Montana Locklear, Andrew and Lillian Maracle, John and Rana Maracle, James and Beulah Pepper, and others.

Becky Fischer, the granddaughter of James Pepper, deposited his personal papers and outfit at the Heritage Center in 2015. "I am so deeply thankful for the godly heritage left to me by my grandparents," states Fischer.

The exhibit honoring Native American AG evangelists is the first in a series of rotating exhibits to be featured in the in the Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center museum. It is open to the public and admission is free.

HIGH SCHOOL MISSIONARIES

BY ANA ELLIOTT

Jessica L. Riner previously served with Youth Alive, a partnership between U.S. Missions and the National Youth Department, as a youth pastor. When John D. Dougherty, Georgia's District youth director, approached Riner about becoming a U.S. missionary with Georgia Youth Alive, she eagerly agreed. Riner's position covers the entirety of the Peach State. She strives to devote herself to significant face time with the students she mentors.

"Almost every week I'm in a different youth group, training and equipping students to see their school as a mission field," says Riner, 40. "I connect with students on a regular basis, emailing them throughout the week and giving ideas for how they can reach their schools."

Riner helps youth pastors try to get on high school campuses, and she is currently working to launch a Seven Project in the district. Riner encourages students to connect with their classmates and to take advantage of God-given ministry opportunities when they arise. Whether it's in the band hall, at the lunch table, riding the bus, or after school, she directs students to always be alert to ways they can share Jesus.

"I'm the dad of three daughters, so I can see the impact Jessica is making even in my own home," Dougherty says. "Female leaders can serve as an incredible role model."



A FLOOD OF BLESSING

BY DEANN ALFORD

In August, Hurricane Harvey deluged Houston with three feet of rain, flooding homes across America's fourth-largest city. But miraculously, Templo Aposento Alto in North Houston and the homes of nearly all its families remained dry, with minimal damage from the devastating storm.

"We thank God for that because that's why we were able to be a distribution center," says Patsy Rodriguez, who co-pastors Aposento Alto with her husband, Texas Louisiana Hispanic District Superintendent J.R. Rodriguez.

During the crisis, Templo Aposento Alto had no time to post signs to announce that the church provided relief. Word of mouth drew both those in need as well as donors with essentials. Aposento Alto's gym filled with supplies contributed by AG congregations.

For two months, thousands in Houston's Little York and Hidden Valley area — typically single moms who speak only Spanish and would not have otherwise approached the

church — received life-sustaining aid from Aposento Alto.

"God just kept supplying," says Rodríguez, 56.

The historic storm that battered the Texas Gulf Coast is deemed second to Hurricane Katrina as the costliest natural disaster in the United States. Many of those to whom Aposento Alto provided aid lost everything.

Since then, a 45-member, mostly female, team from the church of 1,000 has followed up with 300 families to ask how they're faring. They phone, text, and leave voicemail messages. They visit homes to pray. They also bring personal invitations to church programs, including Sunday services, a prayer class, and a Tuesday Bible study designated for those interested in learning more about God's Word.

Rodriguez says Harvey aid recipients are coming to church, little by little. Some have made salvation decisions for Christ, plugging into the church's new beginnings class, from which 12 people recently graduated.

the church is building its volunteer team to eventually offer the program weekly. So far, five Southwest District churches have adopted Powerhouse.

Queta Flores of Iglesia Monte Sinai de las Asambleas de Dios (Mount Sinai AG Church) in Somerton is one of the participating pastors.

"At that tender age, children believe what is placed before them, good or bad," Flores says. "That's why we need to reach them for the Lord with the gospel. We need to reach non-Christian children, not just the children already coming to church."

At a recent Tucson rally, De La Cruz told millennials they needed to take

responsibility for the next generation in prayer and involvement as those who can best relate to and reach kids.

"I'm going to keep crying out to reach the next generation and not lose it," De La Cruz says.

De La Cruz expects pushback from the enemy of the soul, whom he believes has reserved his fiercest fight for children, in an effort to keep them from becoming effective pastors, church leaders, missionaries, and congregants.

"I don't want to fail this generation," he says. "Reaching and discipling children is the most important mission of the church."

NO MINISTRY STRINGS ATTACHED

BY IAN RICHARDSON

Family Worship Center's community outreach ministry started two years ago with some Gatorade and a question. Lead pastor Josh P. Wood and members of the Raton, New Mexico, church brought several bottles of the sports drink to the city's fire station and asked firefighters how the church could help them.

"They said they needed baby wipes because it helps get the smell of smoke off their bodies," Wood says. "That opened up the door."

Church leaders and congregants made it a point to keep dropping off food and necessities, then reached out in similar ways to the police department, school, and town offices.

Over the past two years, the church

has completed several community projects in the town of 6,100. Family Worship Center has started holding an annual dinner for first responders, painted rooms at the local elementary school, orchestrated backpack giveaways, and donated gifts and meals to teachers. Church members recently painted a landmark caboose near the town's visitors center.

As those in the community have seen the church's willingness to serve without asking for anything in return, Wood says those from Faith Worship Center have forged strong relationships with local entities. Town officials now actually call with project proposals.

"True compassion is no strings attached," Wood says.