

# AG | NEWS

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## THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY GLENN W. GOHR

Mark Buntain (1923-1989), a longtime Assemblies of God missionary, is well known for founding a prominent hospital and feeding program in Calcutta, India. He and his wife, Huldah, became iconic symbols of the AG's melding of gospel proclamation with works of compassion.

In October 1954, Mark, Huldah, and their 1-year-old daughter, Bonnie, took a three-month voyage to India. There they set up a tent in Calcutta, and started telling people about Jesus.

One day a man interrupted: "Preacher, feed our bellies and then tell us about a God in heaven." This became the catalyst for the Buntains to start a feeding program, now part

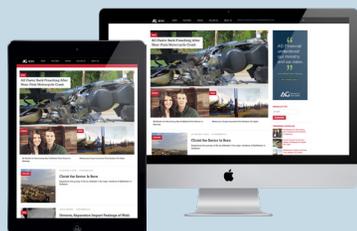
of Calcutta Mercy Missions, that serves thousands of people daily.

Today, more than 60 years later, the Buntains' hearts to reach the people groups of India continues. Calcutta Mercy Ministries operates a hospital that serves people for free, over 900 churches have been established in North India, there are around 100 schools to educate thousands of students, and their feeding ministry continues to serve thousands.

Although Mark died in 1989, Huldah still helps to oversee the ministry they founded.

Read the article, "I Belong to the Sahib," on page 15 of the March 31, 1958, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/mar311968](http://s2.ag.org/mar311968).

Read the full versions of these stories on [news.ag.org](http://news.ag.org)



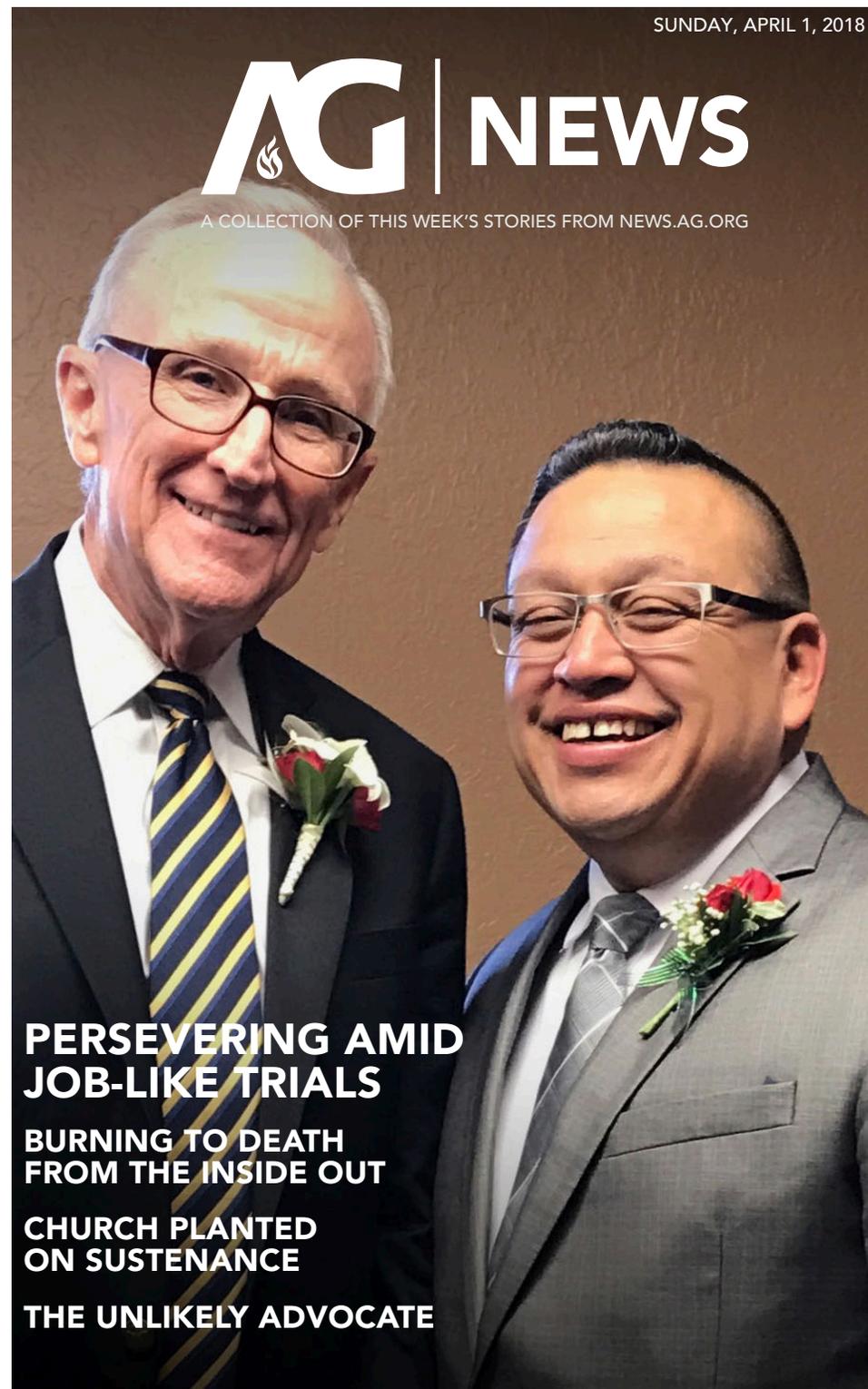
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# PERSEVERING AMID JOB-LIKE TRIALS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Most people after suffering a heart attack and stroke, being diagnosed with diabetes, encephalitis, and multiple sclerosis, plus negotiating for the release of relatives abducted in Mexico — all in the same year — wouldn't eagerly anticipate the next assignment from the Lord.

But Daniel Isaac Tellez went through all these troubles in 2012. And instead of curtailing his spiritual pursuits, he sought more. Tellez is pastor of Hagerman Christian Center as well as the Southern Idaho Ministry Network men's ministry director.

"I felt privileged that God trusted me on a journey of growth," says the 48-year-old Tellez. His father, Nazario, was an AG evangelist who died in 1974 after being stabbed in the back 11 times by religious extremists. His mother, Gregoria, has pastored an AG church in Mexico the past 44 years.

Hagerman Christian Center invited Tellez to be its pastor in 2001, when the church had 35 attendees. Now there are 100 regulars — in a town of 880.

Tellez's health woes began in January 2012, when he suffered a mild heart attack upon returning from a missions trip to St. Lucia and discovered 1,000 gallons of propane had been stolen from the church. Two weeks later he had a stroke. In March of that year, a physician diagnosed Tellez with multiple sclerosis.

"Doctors told me I would be handicapped, lose my voice, and lose



my strength," Tellez says. "So far, none of that has happened."

In April 2012, medical tests detected encephalitis. He says a virus keeps the right side of his brain constantly active, even when he sleeps. Tellez decided to take advantage of his overactive brain activity and earned a degree from Northwest University last year.

The church's investment in the community returned to bless Tellez. Hagerman Christian Center gives cash and other gifts to local schoolteachers every year, paints curbs on the town's main street annually, and in 2007 had paid for a \$120,000 renovation of the police station. People in the community held a fundraiser to help pay Tellez's medical bills.

# HIGH-VELOCITY ALASKAN DISCIPLESHIP

BY PETER K. JOHNSON

The explosive power of discipleship through Chi Alpha Campus Ministries chapters is impacting students at University of Alaska campuses in Fairbanks and Anchorage. Membership in the two chapters has surged to almost 400, ranking Chi Alpha as the university's largest student organization.

Paul D. Burkhardt, Chi Alpha director for the Alaska Ministry Network, and his wife, Crystal, launched the Last Frontier's first Chi Alpha program in 2014 at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). The Burkhardts serve a geographical area twice as large as Texas.

Burkhardt and 14 team members also share Christ in isolated Alaskan villages. Almost 20 percent of UAF's nearly 10,000 students are Alaskan natives and American Indians. Burkhardt challenges leaders to evangelize their friends, which has resulted in more than 100 baptisms. Thus far, 120 young adults have been trained to be disciple makers.

Similar results have happened at the



Chi Alpha chapter at the University of Alaska-Anchorage (UAA), planted by Steve A. Pavек. The UAA chapter has 32 small groups with 200 participants.

"Young people are looking for something real in a culture consumed by the digital world," Pavек says. "Many of them have never met someone their age who is genuinely and passionately serving Jesus. When they come to Chi Alpha they see this for the first time and are attracted to it."

"We have visited numerous villages, and spent hours in prayer and fasting, believing for God to open doors for indigenous ministry into the forgotten communities of Alaska," says Burkhardt. "We are beginning the stages of a discipleship movement and realizing the vision God has birthed in us to reach the unreached and underserved in the last frontiers of Alaska and the world."

## 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."

# BURNING TO DEATH FROM THE INSIDE OUT

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Phoenix Richey was 8 years old when in a 24-hour period she went from a dry cough to a child swollen to triple her size and fighting for her life.

Within 48 hours, her outer layer of skin (the epidermis) began to shed. She looked like she had suffered severe external burns, only this “fire” was internal, caused by a rare virus that left the raw, oozing dermis, with its countless nerve endings, bloody and exposed.

Doctors offered little hope to Joey and Nicole, Phoenix’s stunned parents. Joey, 41, is the worship leader at Calvary Assembly of God in Decatur, Alabama, and Nicole, 36, is the daughter of the lead pastor, George Sawyer.

On Jan. 8, 2017, Nicole took Phoenix to urgent care and she was treated for flu symptoms. A few hours later, Phoenix’s mouth began to hurt, her eye rims turned blood red, and her temperature soared to 105. They headed for the Huntsville Hospital for Women and Children.

By the next morning, Phoenix was in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, swollen beyond recognition and intubated to keep her throat from swelling shut.

When Phoenix’s skin began to shed (slough off), doctors finally knew Steven-Johnson Syndrome was



attacking Phoenix’s body. When skin loss exceeds 30 percent, the virus is categorized as Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis (TEN). Phoenix lost 65 percent. There is no medication to stop SJS/TEN.

The church and family prayed around the clock, interceding for Phoenix. Although doctors gave no hope, God gave the Richeys a peace that He was in control. On Jan. 17, Phoenix was airlifted to the Shriner’s hospital in Cincinnati where, for the first time, doctors spoke about recovery. On Feb. 17, Phoenix was released from the hospital.

Since then, Phoenix has had 21 surgeries to restore sight in her right eye, while her left one remains sewn shut for now. She believes God wants her to become a pediatric ophthalmologist so she can help other kids with their eyes. “I want my story to show people that Jesus is real and so faithful,” she says.

To stay up-to-date on Phoenix’s continuing journey, see Facebook.com/prayforphe.

# JUNIOR BIBLE QUIZ, NOW IN HUNGARIAN

BY DAN VAN VEEN

The Junior Bible Quiz (JBO) program is an exciting and fun way for elementary-age kids in the United States to memorize Scripture verses and Bible teachings. Now, thanks to Boys and Girls Missionary Challenge (BGMC) — a missions program for children — kids in Pentecostal churches throughout Hungary will have access to JBO.

Paul and Jocelyn Gracza, missionaries serving in Hungary, recently expressed their appreciation for BGMC, which funded the translation, stating: “Just a few weeks ago we introduced JBO to many children’s workers serving in the Pentecostal churches throughout Hungary. They love the program! It will be used to help children in the local churches, in local schools, and in summer camps learn more about the Bible, understand Jesus’ love for them, and challenge them to read the Bible regularly.”

Junior Bible Quiz uses the Bible Fact-Pak as its source. The Fact-Pak provides 576 question-and-answer cards in varying degrees of difficulty worth 10, 20, or 30 points. The cards pose questions about people, places, events, and teachings of the Bible.

Mark Entzminger, national Children’s Ministries director, believes that in the future, Hungarian children will be able to point back to JBO as the time when their curiosity about God turned into a hunger for God.

# CHURCH PLANTED ON SUSTENANCE

BY ALLISON N. BLEVINS

Site 61, a church plant from The River in Louisville, Kentucky, recorded 1,010 salvation decisions in 2017.

David J. Heigl has pastored The River for 18 years. He started a food pantry four years ago in the Portland area of downtown Louisville, with churchgoers providing food for low-income families. Heigl says God directed him to hold a church service in conjunction with the food pantry ministry as a way to reach more people for Christ.

Each week when the food pantry is open, Heigl talks to recipients, whom he says often bring up past mistakes as a reason for their needs.

“Real transformation comes from changed thinking,” Heigl says. “We are not defined by our past.”

When Heigl began holding services during the weekly food pantry ministry, more people began to show up — not just for the food, but to hear about Jesus.

Around 130 families are served each week, and of those 80 percent are new. The church plant, Site 61, officially started in 2016 as a direct result of the food pantry outreach. Services are held every Sunday evening.

Most of the people who accepted Christ as Savior last year through the church initially came to a food pantry service. Heigl and other leaders at The River disciple attendees at Site 61 through weekly services, Bible studies, and outreach opportunities.



## THE UNLIKELY ADVOCATE

BY DEANN ALFORD

As a Southeastern University student, Sayra Lozano co-founded a project to help women released from prison to find jobs. She became a leader at her campus chapter of an international entrepreneurship organization.

Between her studies at Southeastern and LABI College, she interned for a congressman, representing her home district both in Southern California and in Washington, D.C.

Lozano's parents, both professionals, moved with her at age 5 from Mexico City to California. Her visa lapsed in 2011, putting her in Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. An immigration attorney informed her family that the sole legal avenues for her would be adoption by a U.S. citizen or via marriage. Lozano, now 23, ruled out both.

She graduated in 2016 and Southeastern, and then completed her MBA at the AG school. The university then hired her to teach business.

Lozano began opening up about her journey, having personal conversations with campus friends, colleagues, and

professors about the policy's personal impact.

"Once I shared my story, I saw that people changed their perspective, because they knew me," Lozano says. "It put a human aspect to the problem."

Lozano met with Southeastern President Kent J. Ingle, who subsequently realized other students in the student body likewise are in Lozano's predicament, but are fearful of coming forward.

"God has a plan for DACA students' lives, and we want to come alongside them and develop the divine call He has for them," Ingle says.

An advocacy organization sponsored Lozano's trips to Washington to meet with Florida congressional representatives and others in positions of influence.

"Dreamers are contributing members of our churches, communities, and the nation," Lozano says. "We simply want the opportunity to continue contributing with the gifts and talents God has given us in the only nation we know as our home."

In September 2012, sex traffickers in Mexico abducted the wife of Tellez's younger brother, Jacob, and the couple's four daughters. Isaac acted as negotiator for a ransom, but federal police liberated the five females, with no one harmed and no ransom paid. Tellez believes the stress of the abduction episode triggered Type 2 diabetes. His diagnosis came in October 2012.

Despite all the health setbacks, Tellez preaches every week and he hasn't stopped going on biannual church missions trips.

"Every time I see him, I encourage

him to slow down, but so far he hasn't listened to me," chuckles Network Superintendent Doyle Fulkes. "It's an inspiration to see him when you realize all he's lived through."

"Doctors have no clue how I am functioning, how I am walking, why I'm not in a wheelchair," Tellez says. "I try to maximize whatever time I have."

In January, physicians identified new lesions on Tellez's brain.

"I do not know how much more time I have left," Tellez admits. "But I live every day as if it's my last. I want to maximize every second of life until the Lord calls me."

## TRANSPLANTED TRANSFORMATION

BY NATHAN HEATH

Nigerian native Bode Abodunde is passionate about reaching Philadelphia with the gospel. But his journey to the pulpit of Transform Church began well outside the city limits of the City of Brotherly Love.

"In my teens, I dabbled in drugs and alcohol and was headed in a downward spiral," Abodunde says. But a co-worker gave Abodunde a Christian book that deeply affected him.

"I read through that book and I broke down crying," Abodunde remembers. "I decided that Sunday I was going to church and give my life to Jesus."

After immigrating to the U.S. to attend college in Philadelphia, where he also met his wife, Kisha, Abodunde felt God calling him to ministry. In

2013, Bode met Brad Leach, pastor of City Life Church, and relayed his church-planting dreams. Leach invited the Abodundes to City Life's church planting residency program.

The residency lasted until Transform Church opened its doors in 2016. Since then, the church has grown to around 120 regular attendees. African-Americans account for about 60 percent of the congregation, with whites and Asians comprising most of the rest. Many are second-generation immigrants in their 20s.

Transform faces some physical and spiritual challenges. Currently, the church meets in a school, but finding a permanent location has been difficult. City Life continues to shepherd Transform Church in polity and financial matters.