

# THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

Lula Bell Hough (1906-2002) sensed God's call to ministry and was credentialed as an Assemblies of God missionary at the age of 23. She left her comfortable life in America and devoted herself to sharing the gospel in China, where she spent the next 45 years. As an unmarried woman in her 20s and 30s, she endured great deprivation and the ravages of war.

Hough's greatest challenge on the mission field came during World War II, when she spent seven and one-half months as a Japanese prisoner of war beginning in December 1941. Women around her were raped, and thousands died from starvation. Hough lost 38 pounds in about six months. She was freed as part of an American-Japanese POW exchange.

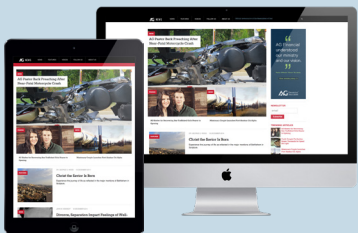
Living in difficult circumstances for over a decade in China had prepared Hough for the hardship of the prisoner-of-war camp. Hough sent regular letters to her supporters back in the United States. One of these letters, published in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, described a trip to areas



in south China where there were no Christians.


Read Hough's article, "Missionary Travels, S. China," on pages 8-9 of the April 21, 1934, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/april211934](http://s2.ag.org/april211934).

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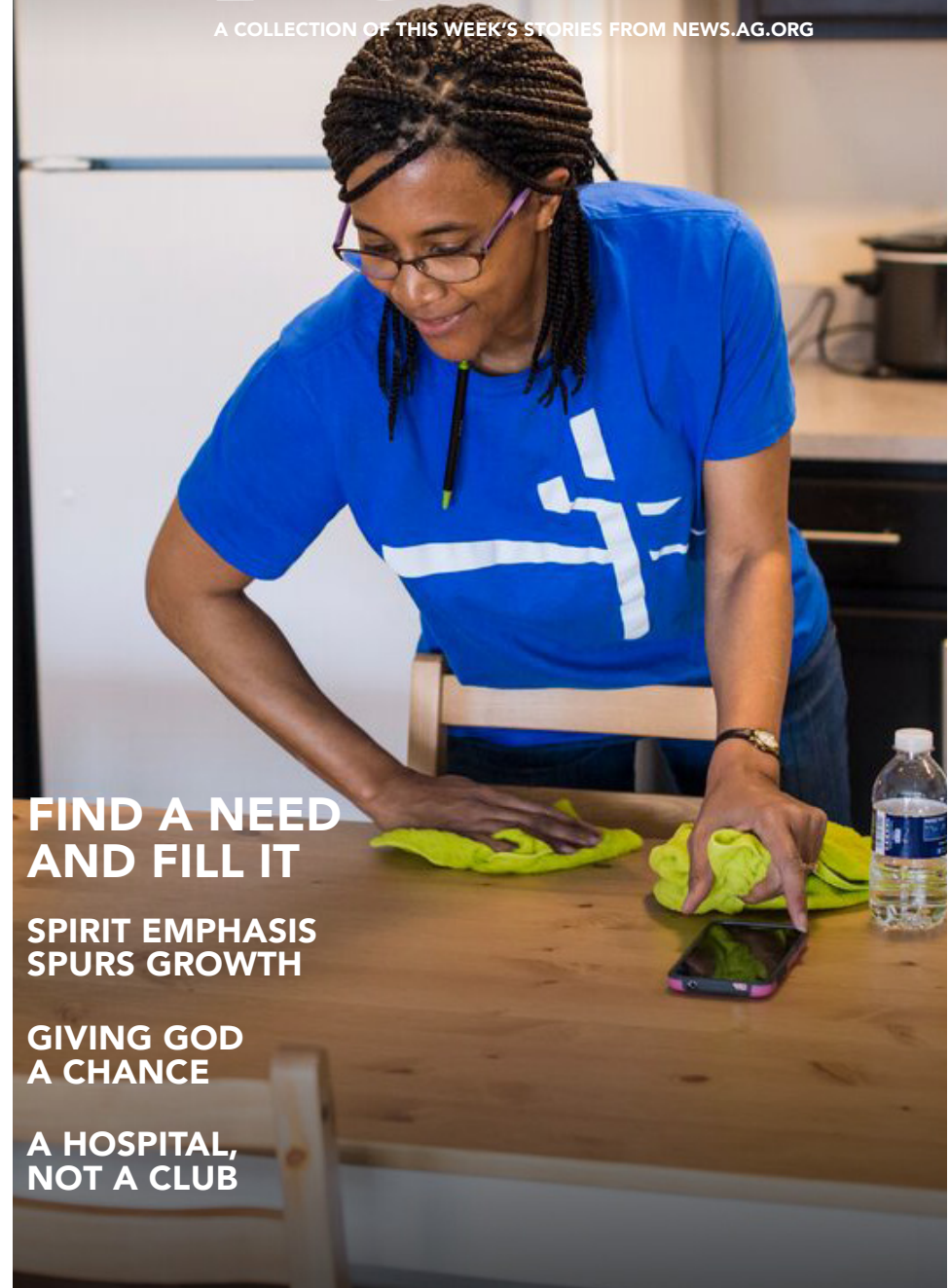
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SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 2018

# AG NEWS

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



## FIND A NEED AND FILL IT

## SPIRIT EMPHASIS SPURS GROWTH

## GIVING GOD A CHANCE

## A HOSPITAL, NOT A CLUB



## FIND A NEED AND FILL IT

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Community Rebuilders, a nonprofit organization that benefits veterans in the Grand Rapids, Michigan, area, needed help refurbishing 21 units designated for homeless veterans in a new apartment building in downtown Grand Rapids. Everything for someone with nothing was desperately needed for the apartments as the organization didn't have enough supplies to fill the need.

A flier made its way to Grand Rapids First. When lead pastors Sam and Brenda Rijkogel finally saw the flier asking for "used items in good condition" to furnish the apartments for the veterans, the couple felt an immediate spurring of the Spirit.

"We decided to bring this request to our congregation," Sam says of the church of about 3,300. "But we didn't want to supply used items, we wanted to refurbish the apartments with new furnishings and appliances."

The Rijkogels estimated that it would take a little over \$3,500 per apartment to properly supply it — an offering of at least \$74,000 was needed. To add to the challenge, the apartments had to be move-in ready in

just two weeks!

On Easter, the need was presented. The congregation responded. An offering of \$148,000 was given — double the amount needed! But the work was just beginning.

Brenda and members of the Grand Rapids First team worked with Vera Beech, the executive director of Community Rebuilders, and her staff in building a database of items and quantities needed, placing a mass order with IKEA for furniture and then with Meijer (a supercenter-type store) for household goods, including small appliances and basic refrigerator and pantry items.

"By faith, the orders were placed for these items before the Easter Sunday offering was received," Brenda reveals.

On Monday, the day after Easter, an 18-wheeler, loaded with 3,000 boxes, including 250 pieces of IKEA furniture arrived. Teams of volunteers from the church flooded the 21 apartments, working to set the rooms up and put the furniture together.

Brenda, who is gifted in organization, states: "No way could we have pulled this off without God.

## PASTOR ACCEPTS COLD CALL

BY CHRISTINA TEMPLE

Just a hundred yards from Canada in a community that prides itself as the frequent coldest spot in the U.S., Pastor Chris Thoresen prays for hope.

Like many small towns, the residents of International Falls, Minnesota, struggle with substance abuse, layoffs, and poverty.

"There's a lot of hopelessness, a lot of despair," Thoresen says. "There's a lot of seeking in the wrong places."

He moved to International Falls to pastor last summer, thanks to financial support from 57 other AG Minnesota District churches in sparsely populated areas. Thoresen, 34, will receive a full-time salary for about two years as he and his family establish a presence at Gateway Assembly. Last spring, the dwindling church of 20 came under district supervision.

Earlier, Thoresen moved to Chicago after pastoring in northwest Minnesota. Then Thoresen says he felt the Lord call him, his wife, Shawna, and their daughters Zoe, 7, and Zelde, 3, to International Falls, which is nicknamed Icebox of the Nation.

"We moved in faith, we sold everything we had," Thoresen says. "We said we had complete peace about it."

The church in the economically strapped community had struggled. The remote town's population has fallen to 6,000, down from 8,300 in 1990.

Before he retired, Minnesota District Superintendent Clarence St. John called area churches last spring to ask for support so Thoresen initially wouldn't have to find additional employment.

All 57 rural churches contacted agreed to send either a one-time contribution or monthly donations to the district to cover Thoresen's salary.

The church has doubled in size since Thoresen became pastor. He says the outside support has been essential.

Last fall, the church held a series of community events for kids. One partnership through the school system, Released Time, allows kids to come to the church for one hour after school during the week. Seven kids accepted Jesus as Savior as a result.

### 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."



## CHURCH IS BUZZING WITH EXCITEMENT

BY KEN WALKER

The Jolo Family Worship Center's new Family Life Center has the McDowell County town of Jolo in West Virginia buzzing with excitement. In March, two mission teams helping with construction and community improvements became the first to stay in the 6,500-square-foot building's dormitory space. Another team is to help finish the gymnasium floor in May.

Jolo FWC Pastor Charles E. Rose had hoped to put the facility into use last September with literacy and General Educational Development classes. However, teachers lined up to teach the sessions told Rose two rooms reserved for those classes were too small. That necessitated additional construction work, and a delay in the program's launch until this fall.

With the gym floor scheduled to be finished this spring, Rose envisions starting youth basketball and volleyball leagues soon.

Rose says AG support has blossomed lately, crediting a 2017 AG News story and an appeal last year at the Appalachian Ministry Network's

annual meeting by Dan Betzer, pastor of First Assembly in Fort Myers, Florida.

"They showed a video clip about our area and Betzer asked, 'How much do you need?'" Rose recalls. "I estimated we needed at least \$40,000 for materials." Betzer agreed to give the first \$1,000.

That night, ushers took up \$11,000. Thanks to additional faith pledges, the offering ultimately generated \$73,000. Rose says more than 80 small churches gave between \$500 and \$1,000 apiece.

First Assembly has donated thousands more, and invited Rose to speak at its annual missions convention last November.

As a result of that appearance, the church began working on a special project to finance Bible distribution in McDowell County. The Fort Myers congregation has already raised \$14,000 to give a *Fire Bible* to 1,400 elementary students this fall. It hopes to collect additional funds to present copies of the Scriptures to all middle and high school pupils on that trip.

## SPIRIT EMPHASIS SPURS GROWTH

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

In Bakersfield, California, Discovery Church is planting congregations that reflect the moving of the Holy Spirit.

"There hasn't been a Sunday where multiple people didn't commit to Christ and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior," says Jason T. Hanash, 38, the pastor who founded the church four years ago.

Since its beginning, the church has grown 40 to 90 percent in size every year, and today averages more than 1,200 people on Sundays. Discovery welcomes the operation of the gifts of the Spirit, which Hanash attributes as a key factor in growth.

"It is important to have a church full of God's power, glory, and presence, and signs and wonders," Hanash says. "The gifts can live together in beautiful harmony, supporting and submitting to one another. I love the power and presence of God to be demonstrated in our environment."

From the start, the congregation has been multiethnic, reflecting Bakersfield's diverse population. In the past two years, Discovery also has become multigenerational after deliberately praying for older people to join. The staff includes African-American, Mexican, Filipino, and white people, and the leadership team is made up of three men and two women.

## GIVING GOD A CHANCE

BY DAN VAN VEEN

When Roy and Kathy Miles came to lead Staples (Minnesota) Assembly of God, a small, poor church that had



experienced a split and much division, they knew healing could take place and the congregation would be amazed by what God could do with finances.

"Five years into our ministry here, we decided to add on to the church," Roy Miles, now 65, says. "It was 'impossible,' because we didn't have the money. But in 1987, we built a \$150,000 addition with no debt."

Miles says that he's told people over and over again that they need to give God a chance to do something. Instead of seeing a situation as impossible, Miles says that if God is in it, then give Him a chance to provide the resources for what He has directed you to do, and sometimes that requires taking a step of faith.

Staples AG, which runs 55 to 60 people (including children) a week, gives \$80,000 to well over \$100,000 a year to missions annually. The church now designates 15 percent of its general fund to missions as it supports 52 missionaries and missionary projects, and regularly welcomes district missionaries in to speak. It also leads the Minnesota district in per capita giving.

# A HOSPITAL, NOT A CLUB

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Dee Lyons is grateful that she likes yogurt. When Idaho Falls New Life Church gave away the dairy product a couple of years ago, that did much more than assuage her physical appetite.

Lyons, a 49-year-old single mother who considered herself irreligious, went to a Sunday morning service to ensure that she would be near the front of the food distribution line after church. But she became so enthralled with the opening sermon on the Book of James she came back the next four weeks to hear concluding messages. Soon after, Pastor Jay Spangenberg baptized Lyons in water, and she has been attending ever since.

She says prayers of people of New Life have sustained her through a series of family health crises. Lyons also lost her job because of the recuperation time needed following her medical procedure.

"I don't think I would have made it through all the challenges without the church," says Lyons. "I know it's ridiculous to say that my whole relationship with God began with a case of yogurt, but that's what happened." She now is a full-time special education teacher.

"We decided to be a hospital to people, not a club," says Spangenberg, 51, noting that the church hosts Alcoholic Anonymous support group that attracts 90 on a



weekly basis. A message of acceptance and forgiveness stands in contrast to the works-mentality lens to which many local residents have become accustomed. Idaho Falls is one of the most heavily concentrated areas of Mormons in the U.S.

Megan Sasinouski has been children's pastor at New Life for a year. Sasinouski, 29, began drinking alcohol at 9 and taking illicit drugs at 11. She spent time in jail for illegal possession. She read the Bible behind bars, rededicated her life to Christ, and has been sober for three years. She started going to the addiction recovery groups at the church.

Logistically, it could have been a nightmare, but it couldn't have been smoother."

Beech admits that she was overwhelmed by not only the generosity of Grand Rapids First, but by the members' servant attitudes. "It was an absolutely amazing experience for us," she says.

"That woman loves the homeless," Sam says of Beech, "and she behaves more like Jesus than some people who sit in pews." The Rijfkogels believe that the partnership was no accident — that this was part of God's design, and that He has a calling on Beech's life.

The Grand Rapids First team completed their task on Friday, April 6,

with a few hours to spare. Bibles were placed in each room along with other Christian reading material. The church has also been given permission to hold a small group meeting for veterans in the complex's community room.

The money remaining from the generous offering for the veterans will be used to continue to bless the veterans as special events and specific Community Rebuilders' needs arise.

"I told Pastors Sam and Brenda over and over again, that we were just so moved and touched by their openness and willingness to serve," Beech says. "... and honestly, it sparked a lot of conversation among our team members about the impact it had on us."

## MEGA SPORTS CAMPS, 100,000 SAVED

BY DAN VAN VEEN

For 14 years, the multi-award-winning MEGA Sports Camp has been offered by thousands of churches and enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of children as the unique combination of sports and spiritual emphasis resonates with kids.

That "resonance," says Julie Horner, senior director of Publishing for the AG, has resulted in over 100,000 children making a commitment to Christ through MEGA Sports Camp since its inception.

"Kids want to be active and have energy to burn," Horner observes, "and MEGA Sports Camp provides the opportunity to burn that energy while also learning new or improving their skills."

However, Horner says, MEGA Sports Camp isn't all about fun and games

— the interactive spiritual component presents Christ to children in a way they understand and accept.

MEGA Sports Camp suggests that churches also offer other activities for children not interested in sports, such as cooking, painting, or drama, while maintaining a strong spiritual component.

"One of the things that makes MEGA Sports Camp so effective is that it enables coaches to establish relationships with kids," states Mark Entzminger, national Children's Ministries director. "Too often kids don't have strong, positive role models or people who truly care about them — MEGA Sports Camp offers kids those opportunities."