

## THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY GLENN W. GOHR

During the 1950s and 1960s, a number of children's homes were operating in Alaska, with many of these directed by Assemblies of God home missionaries or local churches. One of these was the Juneau Children's Home, which was started by missionaries Lyle and Helen Johnson in their home in 1934.

Around 1938, the Johnsons bought a house in Juneau — the start of what became known as Johnson's Children Home and, later, the Juneau Children's Home. In 1953 they added a dormitory.

After Helen Johnson's death in 1967, Gus and Evelyn Peterson took over the Juneau Children's Home. Evelyn Peterson remembered that

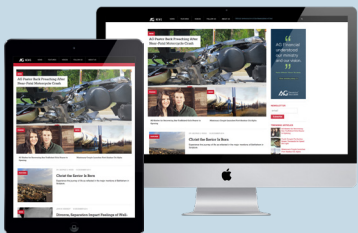
first Christmas: "As I stood looking at the tree with the gifts surrounding it, I couldn't control the stream of tears; for I realized this would be the first Christmas filled with cheer, happiness, and meaning for many of our children."

The Juneau home closed in 1991, after 57 years of continual operation.

Currently AG U.S. Missionaries Brian and Linda Staub operate Haven House Foster Care in Big Lake Alaska, near Wasilla. The Assemblies of God also operates COMPACT Family Services in Hot Springs, Arkansas.



Read "Christmas in Juneau," by Evelyn V. Peterson on pages 7-8 of the Nov. 26, 1967, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/nov261967](http://s2.ag.org/nov261967).

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SUNDAY, DEC. 2, 2018

# AG NEWS

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

## EVENING OF ELEGANCE AT RICE

### WEEK OF PRAYER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

### REINVENTING THE VILLE

### AIA INITIATIVE IMPACTS AFRICA





## EVENING OF ELEGANCE AT RICE

BY DEANN ALFORD

When U.S. missionaries Josh and Jamie Bell launched the Chi Alpha Campus Ministries chapter at Rice University in 2008, the biggest bash on the Houston campus was the Night of Decadence (NOD). The bold name is an accurate description of the annual October event. Students donning only their underclothes — or less — attend the iconic campus party fueled by an unlimited supply of alcohol.

A quarter or more of the private university's 4,000 undergraduate students attended the event, which has shaped campus culture since its inception in 1972. In 2010, NOD attendance peaked at 1,500.

But six years after pioneering the U.S. Missions ministry, the Rice Chi Alpha staff had grown to seven and about 100 students attended weekly meetings. Now the largest Christian organization on campus, Chi Alpha had sufficient team capacity to put on a larger, God-

honoring event.

"In 2014, we asked the Lord, *How do we answer this party?*" Josh P. Bell recalls. The team began to brainstorm. The logical alternative to a Night of Decadence appeared to be offering a free elegant celebration.

For Evening of Elegance, attendees come dressed up, many arriving in horse-drawn carriages. A live jazz band plays 1940s swing numbers. Dance instructors teach swing steps to the uninitiated. Hors d'oeuvres and sparkling nonalcoholic drinks are served beneath canopies of twinkle lights. Donors for the \$30,000 event are primarily Rice alumni and their parents.

Three hundred students showed up for the first Evening of Elegance. For more than 40 years, to fit into Rice campus culture, students felt they had to attend Night of Decadence. But after the first Evening of Elegance, attendees at the alternative event posted their

## GOD'S REDEMPTION PLAN

BY GINGER KOLBABA

Being involved in ministry was the farthest thing from Jonathan K. Thacker's mind. It didn't matter that most of his family already served the Lord, including his father, pastor at Roseville AG in Paris, Arkansas.

For almost a decade, Thacker and his wife, Brittany, drifted from their faith and enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle. He worked in Arkansas' natural gas fields, while Brittany worked as a nurse. In 2012, their marriage began to crumble from distrust and bad choices both made.

The reality of an impending divorce pushed Jonathan into a deep depression that left him on the brink of suicide. But one night in 2013, Jonathan cried out in repentance. "God hadn't given up on me," Jonathan says. "I knew He was offering me help." He began attending Pottsville AG, studying the Bible, and praying diligently for his marriage.

Though Jonathan became filled with peace, Brittany remained skeptical, believing her estranged husband

wanted to trick her into returning to the marriage. As the months went by with no change, Jonathan wondered how God could fix the mess.

Finally, Brittany felt compelled to return to her husband and make the relationship right. They recommitted their lives to God and to each other.

In 2014, Jonathan preached his first message at Verdigris AG in Claremore, Oklahoma, resulting in the altar lined with people seeking God. Jonathan quit his job and attended the Arkansas School of Ministry. In 2015, he preached his first revival service, also at Verdigris, and felt God calling him to be an evangelist. He now heads Jonathan Thacker Ministries.

The Thackers began home schooling their children Tyson, 9, and Kensley, 6. They bought a truck and a fifth-wheel camper, and Jonathan started preaching at revivals wherever the opportunity arose. Now in his third year, Thacker will preach at more than two dozen revivals in 2018.

### 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."



## REINVENTING THE VILLE

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Joe Contreras has enjoyed a multifarious career, working as a magazine editor for AG World Missions, teaching high school English on the Mexican border, and serving in Spain as an AGWM missionary before his wife, Joy, received a diagnosis of multiple sclerosis.

Contreras then spent 21 years as senior pastor of First AG in Elizabeth, New Jersey. The bivocational Contreras taught in public schools most of those years. Upon Joe's retirement from teaching at 65, the couple moved to Springfield, Missouri, to be closer to their daughter, Angela Brooks.

"I thought perhaps I could still be preaching," says Contreras. For the past four years, Contreras, now 69, has been lead pastor at Highlandville AG. Contreras and a team from the small church recently wrapped up attending quarterly seminars of the Acts 2 Journey. As a result, Contreras has amended his ministry philosophy of reach, teach, and launch.

"We launched, but we didn't keep

enough and the church got smaller," Contreras says. "People go elsewhere for bigger opportunities. We're switching visions to be a local church rather than a sending agency."

One way to accomplish that is a decision by the church to begin allocating \$500 per semester to pay for delinquent lunch bills of pupils at the local elementary school.

The first Sunday in January, Highlandville Assembly of God will be rebranded The Ville Worship Center, in a nod to the church's youth group, known as The Ville among local high school students.

Monica Montalvo started going to the church about the time Contreras arrived — when almost no one under 60 attended. She started the youth group with her daughter Faith, now 14. Today 10 attend the youth gathering regularly.

"God called me into an area I never thought I would be," says Montalvo. "Because we are so small and don't have a great amount of funds or manpower, we have to be creative."

## AIA INITIATIVE IMPACTS AFRICA

BY DENNY MILLER

In recent weeks, the Acts in Africa (AIA) Initiative has provided more than 3,800 sermon outline books to pastors in East and Southern Africa.

In this effort, AIA distributed the book *Proclaiming Pentecost: 100 Sermon Outlines on the Power of the Holy Spirit* in Burundi (French and Kirundi), Malawi (English and Chichewa), and Zambia (English and Chichewa). This powerful resource is now being used by pastors and church leaders to mobilize their churches for Spirit-empowered evangelism and church planting.

AIA has since received reports of people being filled with the Spirit as pastors preach messages from the book, which was compiled and edited by AIA Associate Director Mark Turney.

The book was given to urban as well as rural pastors and church leaders to use as a teaching resource. Malawian AG missionary Alfred Chati messaged: "I am using the book to equip, train, empower, and mobilize new pastors in Mozambique."

To date, AIA has distributed about 40,000 copies of *Proclaiming Pentecost* in nine languages and 33 countries across Africa. The Spanish-language version is also being used in two countries in Central America and in the Philippines. AIA's goal is to place a copy of the book in the hands of each of the 83,000 AG ministers in Africa.

## REACHING OUTDOOR ADVENTURERS

BY AGTRUST

In 2013, after a 10-year effort to revive a struggling church in Prescott, Arizona, Pastors Steve and Brenda Lummer earnestly sought God's guidance.

That same year, Steve Lummer and a church leadership team participated in an Acts 2 Journey cohort, through which they began to find direction, and after much prayer they transitioned the 70-year-old Assemblies of God church into a new effort called Discovery Church.

"The Acts 2 Journey (A2J) took us to a place where a new vision could be birthed," Lummer says, "and helped Discovery Church create a mission statement that defined us and fit exactly what the church is meant to be doing: Loving God, Connecting People, Discovering Christ. As a result of the A2J process, we began to feel a pull to reach a people group we termed as the 'Outdoor Nations.'"

As Discovery Church attendees gathered to worship and study God's Word, as well as share in outdoor adventures, the church began to grow.

The church meets every Sunday at the Crossroads Center on the campus of Prescott College. In addition to their weekly church services, each month they have a missional emphasis using hiking, biking, rafting, and other outdoor adventures to reach and teach people with the love of Christ.



## UNCOVERING THE RIGHT MENTOR

BY ROBERT E. MIMS

Rural pastors in the Illinois, faced with leading small, often economically strapped congregations in off-the-beaten-track communities, needed a mentor offering rock-ribbed determination and experience, both spiritual and practical. District Superintendent Phil Schneider believes he found his man in Don L. Wallace, whose 74 years of life took him on a circuitous route to the ministry.

As a young adult, Wallace rebelled against his Pentecostal upbringing, taking on jobs as a bartender, tavern bouncer, coal miner, and trucker — as well as a rough lifestyle, including drug use. The lifestyle eventually proved too much for his wife, Lois. After two decades of marriage, at age 38, Wallace found himself served with divorce papers and the couple separated.

On Easter 1983, Wallace returned to the Lord. A year later, the couple not only rebounded in a healed marriage, but Wallace had taken to preaching. Ultimately, Wallace became a part-time associate pastor at Salem AG. In 1988, the Wallaces took up the challenge

of a struggling church of 60 people in Effingham.

When Wallace retired two years ago, ending 28 years as senior pastor to settle back in Salem, Effingham Assembly averaged 350 worshippers.

But as the Wallaces, married for 56 years and great-grandparents four times over, settled into a quiet retirement, Schneider had other ideas.

"Don and Lois Wallace have the ability to speak the language that people in small communities understand," Schneider says. "Asking Don and Lois to help these pastors and churches seems like a natural first step."

Wallace helps lead two-hour workshops at multiple locations and times each month. Topics range from financial stewardship and pastor-board relations to recruiting and keeping volunteers. But often his new ministry is more low-key.

Currently, Wallace is mentoring several pastors on a deeper, more personal level, sometimes spending hours at a time counseling a pastor about challenges at church.

appreciation on Facebook.

The next year, 500 attended, and the year after, 650. Then in 2017, Evening of Elegance attendance hit 1,000, surpassing NOD by 200.

"At the end of the day, we hope to inspire bigger questions about life, not just, *What can I do for fun tonight?*" Bell says.

Rice chemistry professor James M. Tour, who is a Christian, notes the alternative to NOD is particularly important for first-year students who believed attending Night of Decadence was essential for their acceptance on campus.

"Evening of Elegance is really first class," says Tour, 59. "What these students have pulled off is an amazing

evening. It's extremely well done. I think it's terrific." Tour points out that today one of every 10 Rice undergraduate students is in a Bible study, and at least half of them are through Chi Alpha.

Bell sees the importance of being obedient to God even in the face of ostensibly overwhelming opposition.

"We should be willing to say yes to God, even if it's over our head," Bell says. "Stuff you never dreamed is possible if you'll just obey God and be willing to do what He asks you to do."

That includes the amazing amount of donations that allows the Chi Alpha group to offer the event — which features six horse-drawn carriages — at no charge.

## WEEK OF PRAYER RESOURCES AVAILABLE

BY DAN VAN VEEN

The Assemblies of God 77th annual Week of Prayer will take place Jan. 6-12, 2019. Held annually on the first full week of the new year, The Week of Prayer is designed to help ministers and congregants start their year off with a purposeful focus on making God the focus of life through prayer.

Beginning on Sunday and running through Saturday, each day has a specific prayer focus. The seven 2019 daily prayer points include: Your Walk With God, Your Family, Your Community, Your Workplace, Rural and Urban America, Our World, and Your Church.

The Assemblies of God national office provides free support materials available in English and Spanish as well as

resources to consider at [weekofprayer.ag.org](http://weekofprayer.ag.org). Support materials to download include the Daily Prayer Points and their subpoints, a bulletin insert, email header, images for slide presentations, images for social media postings, and videos featuring each of the AG executive directors briefly addressing one of the prayer points.

During the Week of Prayer, church attendees are encouraged to get involved personally by signing up (in English or Spanish) for a specific time to pray that God would do great and transformational things in the hearts and lives of all believers and potential believers.