

## THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

Nearly every major religious revival since the invention of the printing press has seen prolific use of the small printed pamphlet known as the gospel tract. The Pentecostal revival has been no exception.

The Assemblies of God, through Gospel Publishing House (GPH), began publishing tracts almost immediately upon its inception in 1914. GPH published tracts by their own Fellowship leaders, such as E. N. Bell, E. S. Williams, and Stanley Frodsham, as well as prominent preachers such as A. G. Ward and, later, his son, C. M. Ward.

GPH tracts covered a wide variety of topics, such as the need for holiness and separation from worldliness through

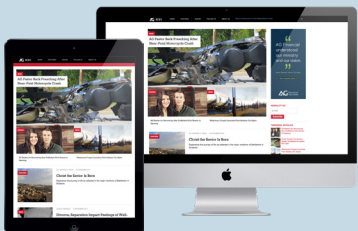
consecration to God.

In 1926, one AG layman in Springfield, Missouri, Lester Buttram, started to print tracts on his own. This led to the formation of the Gospel Tract Society, which is currently based in Independence, Missouri.

With gospel tracts, believers are able to leave written and visual material in a variety of places, providing all kinds of people with a relevant message. Gospel Publishing House, through My Healthy Church, continues to offer a wide variety of tracts for use in evangelistic ministry.

Read the call for tract distribution on page 3 of the Feb. 10, 1940, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/feb101940](http://s2.ag.org/feb101940).

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



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SUNDAY, FEB. 10, 2019

# AG<sup>®</sup> NEWS

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



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ADJUSTMENTS**

**MUSIC & MESSAGE  
MERGE IN NASHVILLE**

**REACHING TECHIES  
IN THE BAY**

**LEADERS BENEFIT  
FROM HYDRATE**



## PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENTS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Ronnie S. Morris is lead pastor of Russellville First Assembly, a congregation with a rich spiritual heritage in a region considered the buckle of the Bible belt. Over 700 people attend the church, founded the same year the Assemblies of God organized in 1914 in Hot Springs, Arkansas — a mere 70 miles south of Russellville.

"Our church was birthed in the hotbed of revival," says Morris, 62. Russellville, a growing city of 29,300, has 80 churches. Russellville First Assembly is highly visible on a major thoroughfare in the community. The church also is only half a mile from Arkansas Tech University, a school with nearly 10,000 students that has a Chi Alpha Campus Ministries presence.

Nevertheless, Pentecostalism has changed since the early part of the 20th century.

"We live in a culture when people are more reserved and not exposed to a

move of the Spirit," says Morris, who in 2005 succeeded Larry Moore — elected district superintendent after 15 years as Russellville pastor. "The challenge is to help people flow into a mindset that allows the Holy Spirit pre-eminence in daily loves and corporate worship. We don't want to be all about experience, but we want to be true to who we are as a church of His presence."

That is becoming more challenging as the congregation ages. In his 13 years at the church, Morris says 100 onetime core adherents have either died or are homebound. Helping existing and potential attendees to become more committed is one of the reasons Morris opted last year to have church leaders participate in the Acts 2 Journey: four two-day sessions, led by AG Assistant General Superintendent Alton Garrison. Morris believes the practical teachings will help the church reach what he calls "the Jacob generation," or third-generation Pentecostals.

## YOUTH TAKE ON CHALLENGE FOR STL

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Egg head. Wasabi breath. Chocolate-syrup hair. Snail eater. These were just a few of the "badges of courage" that could have been distributed to the students from Grace Pointe Assembly of God on February 3.

In an effort to raise money for Speed the Light the AG youth missions program that provides vehicles and communication tools for missionaries, more than a dozen youth from the Carthage, Missouri, church participated in a gross food challenge. The event was live-streamed on Facebook and Instagram. Over \$800 was raised on site, while the amount raised online is not yet determined.

Pastor Jeremiah Johnson, who came to Carthage in August 2018, says his wife, Rachel, who serves as youth pastor, and their two teenage daughters, Zoe and Gabrielle, came up with the idea — and the rest of the youth group bought in to it.

Round one began simply with a raw egg/hardboiled egg contest. Students discovered if they had drawn one of the few hardboiled eggs only after smashing the eggs on their heads!

The second round, students were given paper bags with a mystery food inside. Prior to opening it, students had to say whether they were going to eat it or wear it. Ketchup, French dressing, yogurt, and more coated students' hair while soy sauce was one of the stiffest "eating" challenges.

In the third round, pairs of students could either keep or switch their mystery food trays before consuming the contents. One tray typically contained a treat — peanuts, candy, marshmallows, etc. The other tray revealed items such as minced garlic, canned spinach, escargot, and wasabi peas.

In the final round, two cheeseburger kids meals with their accompanying soft drinks were made into "kids meal smoothies" to drink. Some chugged the liquid meal, while others had more of a struggle to down the chunky beverage.

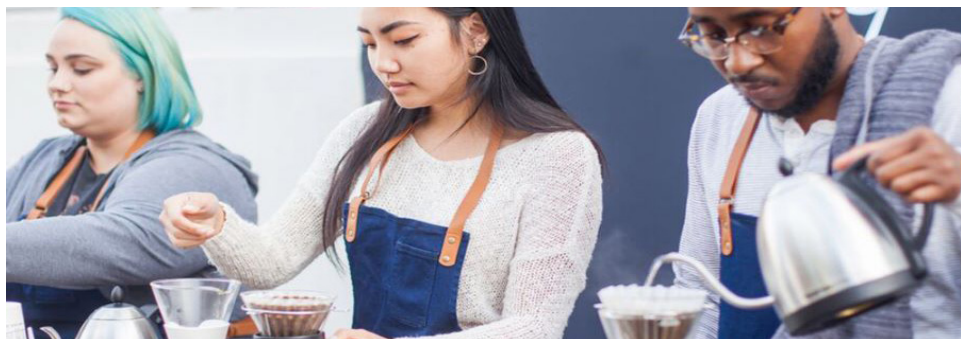
Johnson says a reason he and his family were drawn to Grace Pointe Assembly was the heart for missions that the church had demonstrated over the years.

### 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



## REACHING TECHIES IN THE BAY

BY JOEL KILPATRICK

Travis B. Clark and wife, Jena, planted Canvas, an Assemblies of God congregation, in downtown San Francisco in 2013 to reach millennials and the tech community. Today, the church draws 400 people per Sunday, many of them with minimal spiritual backgrounds.

"Being around people who are skeptical or don't believe in God is pretty familiar space for me," says Travis, who grew up in a family full of skeptics. "Jena and I are wired to live in cities, especially cities where being a person of Christian faith is a minority."

Canvas, which until recently was in a parent-affiliated relationship with New Life Church, a megachurch located in the suburb of Dublin, California, meets in a middle school in a wealthier part of San Francisco called the Marina District. The church draws young singles and families who work for industry giants such as Facebook and Google.

"I felt that if I could give my life to anything, it's building the local church and creating space where wounded and skeptical people like my high school self could find belonging, even before they

believe," says Clark.

Travis and Jena, now both 32, pursued their education though Global University, then felt a particular burden for the Bay Area of California.

"We like environments where people who are shaping the world in massive ways live," he says. "The startup culture here is shaping the world through their passions every day."

With the support of the Church Multiplication Network (CMN), the Clarks and two dozen people from Mesa uprooted and moved to San Francisco. The Clarks attended a CMN Launch training event, which convinced them into planting the church.

New Life Church, pastored by Doug Heisel, also is a strategic partner.

"New Life came behind us relationally and financially, which gave us the proper foundation to start well," Clark says.

"This is a city of people who have clarity of what they want to do," Clark says. We felt like if we could point people to the full life of Jesus, these world changers would change the world for the sake of a story bigger than themselves."

## LEADERS BENEFIT FROM HYDRATE

BY DAN VAN VEEN

For many Assemblies of God churches, the title that often accompanies "children's ministry director" is "volunteer." Although a passion to reach children for Christ is why people volunteer for this role, AG Children's Ministry recognizes that many leaders can feel like they have no options for development.

"These volunteers rarely have an opportunity for training," explains Kelly Presson, director of Leadership Development for AG Children's Ministry. "In order for them to attend a conference, that often means taking a week of vacation from their jobs and paying their own way."

In June 2018, AG Children's Ministry launched Hydrate as a way for children's ministries leaders to experience high-end training. Hydrate is an online connection to top children's ministries leaders such as Brian Dollar, Dick Gruber, Tina Houser, David Boyd and others who share their insights on four key areas each month: Leadership Training, Eight Goals Strategies, Practical Methods, and Curriculum.

Also, each month, members are contacted by their coaches to invite them to a small group coaching call referred to as a Hydrate Huddle.

The introductory cost is just \$10 a month through monthly auto-pay. To learn more, see the Hydrate web page at [kidmin.ag.org/hydrate](http://kidmin.ag.org/hydrate).

## NEXT GENERATION GRANTS AWARDED

BY AG TRUST

Each year the AG Next Generation Grant is awarded to a select number of graduates of Assemblies of God colleges and universities, based on financial need, who plan to enter full-time ministry.

Matthew Maestas, one of 14 recipients of the 2018 AG Next Generation Grant made possible by AGTrust donors, was commissioned as an active duty naval chaplain in January. An ordained AG minister, he completed the Master of Divinity degree at the AG Theological Seminary in 2016.

"I was denied a commission at my first Navy Chaplain CARE Board," Maestas says. "Therefore, I moved my family to Wellington [Kansas] to gain the experience in pastoral ministry that I needed. That move put us in a tight financial situation, but we knew Wellington First was where God had placed us."

"I am humbled by and grateful to the AGTrust partners for honoring me with the AG Next Generation Grant," he says. "God has blessed Melissa and me along this journey, and because of your help I'm better prepared to do what God has called me to do."

So far, 1,385 scholarships and grants totaling over \$3.4 million to AG university students and graduates have been provided through AGTrust.

Learn more about AGTrust scholarships and grants at [AGTrust.org](http://AGTrust.org).



## REPRESENTING THE LORD

BY WILLIAM RINCÓN

Reynaldo “Rey” Gonzalez Jr., a licensed attorney raised in an Assemblies of God pastoral home, focuses his practice primarily on church law in connection with nearly 2,000 congregations. In Texas, he serves as general counsel to the four Latino districts: the West Texas and Plains District, South Central Hispanic District, Texas Louisiana Hispanic District, and the Texas Gulf Hispanic District. He also represents the Unified Pentecostal Local Churches International denomination at the national level as its general counsel.

“It is a great honor and responsibility to represent so many churches,” says the 38-year-old Gonzalez — who also is a medical doctor. “I appreciate the leadership and sound doctrine that AG stands upon, and it is comforting to know that every leader is held accountable within our governing structure. Most important is our belief that the Holy Spirit is alive and active in the Church today.”

His mother, Dora S. Gonzalez, founded Templo Ebenezer in San Benito, Texas, in 1985. Gonzalez began serving as the church pianist at the age of 10. He has taught Sunday School at the church since graduating from Baylor

University in 2002 with a Bachelor of Science degree.

“It is a true blessing to witness the change that happens when teens come to truly know who they are in Christ,” he says.

At 22, he earned his private pilot’s license and joined the U.S. Air Force Auxiliary, recently earning a promotion to major. After graduating from Ross University School of Medicine in 2008, Gonzalez turned to his faith after failing to gain acceptance into any residency training program.

“I asked God why He would take me through medical school and I prayed for direction,” Gonzalez remembers. “He then led me to study law.”

He graduated from the University of Dayton School of Law in 2010 with his Juris Doctor degree, but still has a passion for medicine. He worked as an adjunct professor at the University of Texas from 2002-16, has participated in various medical mission trips, and uses his background in medicine to help him better represent clients as an attorney.

Gonzalez met Noela Garcia at a district council meeting where she received her credentials as a minister. They wed in December.

“We’re really going to target people who are 25 to 40 years old,” Morris says. “We want to build relationships through small groups and in serving in the church.”

As with most churches in this generation, Russellville First Assembly competes for attention on Sunday mornings.

The Acts 2 Journey instruction will enable Russellville First Assembly to change gradually, according to Richard A. Kluender, a retired college dean who serves as a part-time staff member. Kluender, 73, notes that a cross-generational team spent a year defining the congregation’s values and mission.

“Our church is old in the Movement and we have a terrific institutional

memory that shapes a lot of what we do,” says Kluender. “The Acts 2 process has spiritual values embedded in it. This is not just a buy-in process. There is a standard for what we’re trying to accomplish.”

Another cultural challenge is looming on the horizon. State voters in November approved a constitutional amendment to allow a full-fledged casino to be built in Pope County, where Russellville is located.

Although it would face local legal hurdles before being constructed, a Mississippi corporation announced in December plans to open a \$254 million hotel and casino in Pope County by mid-2020.

## MUSIC & MESSAGE MERGE IN NASHVILLE

BY AGTRUST

Kurtis and Sarah Parks launched Bridges Nashville church plant in September 2018 in Nashville, Tennessee. The church meets in “The Listening Room,” a premier singer/songwriter spot.

Growing up as a pastor’s kid, Kurtis Parks led church worship at age 13 and went on to pursue a career in the music field. Prior to this church plant, he had served as worship leader at National Community Church in Washington, D.C.

“Nashville is Music City, and Sarah and I love it,” Parks says, who explains that they had a desire to influence its culture by merging music with message.

Bridges Nashville, located a mile from low-income project housing, is also a

community-driven church. The church has partnered with schools and other ministries to provide over 500 backpacks filled with school supplies for area students, conduct a Thanksgiving food drive, and host a Christmas gift shop for parents to shop for free for their kids.

The AGTrust Matching Funds helped with the start-up needs at Bridges, including the purchase of a trailer, production gear, instruments, marketing tools, and kids Bible curriculum.

“Our prayer is that the people of Music City will be transformed one life at a time by an encounter with Jesus, and through relationship, discipleship, and worship,” Parks says.