

# THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

A person's last words often reveal what was in his or her heart.

John Thomas Boddy, former editor of the *Pentecostal Evangel* (1919-1921), was a poet and a deep theological thinker. He was ordained by the Free Methodist Church in 1901 and transferred his credentials to the Assemblies of God in 1917. When he passed away on Nov. 6, 1931, he left behind a message that he wanted those still alive to carefully consider.


What was Boddy's message from his deathbed?

Boddy's daughter, Macie Lucas, wrote that her father meditated constantly on the Word of God while ill during the last two months of his life. She recounted that he preached for hours at a time while on required bedrest, and that he sensed an urgency to share, above all else, biblical truths about the holiness of God.

According to Lucas, during his last weeks, Boddy repeatedly quoted Hebrews 12:14: "Without holiness no



man shall see God." She recounted that, as Boddy was sharing about holiness, "his face would be radiant with the glory of God."

Read about Boddy's last words in the article, "A Revelation of Heaven," by Macie M. Lucas, on page 6 of the Feb. 6, 1932, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at [s2.ag.org/feb61932](http://s2.ag.org/feb61932). 



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# PARKINSON'S WAS TAKING HIS MINISTRY, HIS LIFE

BY DAN VAN VEEN

For nearly a decade, Pastor Robbie Willis, 37, of Mulberry (Arkansas) First Assembly of God has been dealing with physical struggles that doctors were unable to properly diagnose. Fainting spells, tremors, and extreme weakness after exertion had left doctors perplexed.

But God would do something so miraculous in his life that Robbie's skeptical neurosurgeon was left just shaking his head in amazement.

Robbie and Anna May, who have been married 18 years and have five children, believed in their call to ministry while also praying for Robbie's healing. But their prayers seemed to go unheeded.

Finally, in 2016, Robbie's neurologist ordered a DaTSCAN. Robbie was informed he had Autosomal Recessive Parkinson's Disease. In addition to all the classic signs of the disease, the test revealed a clear loss of dopamine in the left side of Robbie's brain.

As the months progressed, so did the Parkinson's. Although the Willises believed that God would heal Robbie, a tremendous battle between faith and "fact" — what was happening before their eyes — was well underway. The future looked, at best, grim.

Mary Davis, 71, grew up at Grace Church (AG) in Burseson, Texas. She and her husband own a cabin in Salus, Arkansas, and when there, they attend a Pentecostal church led by Pastor



Robert Boen.

Robert and the Davises knew the Willises well as Anna May grew up in the church and Robbie cut his preaching teeth there. When Mary learned of Robbie's diagnosis, she began praying for him.

But then, Mary had a dream of being in Robbie's church and announcing that she was there to pray for him. Mary believed the dream was from God. A few weeks later, while visiting Salus, she told Pastor Robert about the dream.

Robert told Mary that she should pray for Robbie exactly the way God showed her in the dream.

On Sunday, Oct. 29, 2017, Mary went to the evening service at Robbie's church. The presence of God was palpable. Midway through the service Mary was given the microphone.

When Mary asked Robbie to walk to the pulpit, Anna May and Steve Shipley, the assistant pastor, had to

# CONCERN FOR THE YAZIDI FIGHTER

BY MATT HUFMAN

Through a series of events Tim J. Hayes calls miraculous, Hayes and his wife, Janis, brought Yousif Shaheen to Springfield, Missouri, for a surgery in January that restored sight in Shaheen's blinded right eye. Shaheen, a 27-year-old Yazidi fighter, suffered injuries to both eyes in 2015 while combating ISIS in northern Iraq.

"We want to show the love of Christ and the hope we have in our hearts with people in desperate circumstances," says Hayes, the son of two international AG evangelists. "My hope is this person can see the love of Christ."

In several trips overseas, Hayes, an attorney, paid his own and others' way to enter war zones — including in Iraq with ISIS — to help with logistics, securing supplies, and teaching combat medicine. On one trip, Hayes brought Todd Pierson, an optometrist who attends James River Church in Ozark, Missouri. Four previous surgeries in Iraq failed to heal Shaheen's vision.

Afterwards, Hayes defied the odds



and secured a visa for Shaheen to secure a visa to the U.S. Hayes bought a ticket for Shaheen, giving him his first airline trip, and Pierson rounded up help in Missouri, including an ophthalmologist to do the partial corneal replacement for Shaheen. All the medical professionals involved donated their services.

The result is that Shaheen can now see out of his once-blinded eye.

As he recovers in Springfield, Shaheen is staying with Niazi Altuhafi, a retired ear, nose, and throat doctor. Altuhafi and his family, Iraqis who have applied for refugee status in the U.S., attend Central Assembly of God.

"If we plant a good seed, it will grow," Altuhafi says. "I want him to have the good seed."

## 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."





## PRAYER PLEA NO LONGER UNSPOKEN

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

The daughter and granddaughter of Pentecostal pastors, Charla Blair knew in third grade that she wanted to preach the gospel. Yet sharing her inner conflict with anyone at the AG church she attended with her parents didn't seem wise in the era — the late 1980s when some pastors denounced homosexuality as an abomination and AIDS as God's punishment. Although she never entered into a lesbian liaison, Blair says she spent years in emotionally unhealthy, inappropriate, and dependent relationships with other females.

For the past 13 years, Blair, 43, has been executive administrator to AG Northern California-Nevada Assistant Superintendent Samuel Huddleston. Blair started Unspoken Ministries in 2005, when she led a youth group of 20 kids and recognized a couple of them trying to figure out their sexual identity. As a teenager, she raised her hand for an "unspoken request" at


prayer time, not wanting to divulge the inner turmoil she sensed about her own attraction to females.

"I know Jesus didn't die on a cross for me to be gay," Blair says.

Many ministry doors have opened for Blair to tell her story as a young woman of God struggling with unnatural sexual impulses.

"I show young people there is a third option," Blair says. "The opposite of homosexuality isn't heterosexuality. It's holiness. What does it look like to walk that out?"

Blair is able to share openly now what she long tried to keep hidden. As an ordained AG evangelist, she speaks and teaches on weekends at churches, conferences, and women's events.

"God is using the very struggle I thought would keep me from going into ministry to propel me forward into ministry," she says. "Now we really want to talk about it in churches and we have resources for it." 

## THE QUEEN OF KATWE AND MORE!

BY DAN VAN VEEN

When Phiona Mutesi, 21, and Benjamin Mukumbya, 19, stepped onto Northwest University's (NU) campus in Kirkland, Washington, as college freshmen in September, God had already orchestrated such miraculous things in their lives that a book was written and Disney had produced a movie about them!

Mutesi and Mukumbya are from the slums of Katwe in Kampala, Uganda. Their childhood was one of extreme poverty, but soon after missionary Robert Katende helped them learn to play chess, life began to change.

"My family did not know about God," Mukumbya says. "But after joining with Coach Robert, in the evening we would gather together, share testimonies, read Bible Scriptures, and he would tell us about the gospel. One day, I decided to give my life to Jesus — it felt so good."

Mutesi was from a Christian family, but attended the academy for the free meal. Not long after learning the game, Mutesi started to do something unheard of — beat boys!

Soon Katende's "slum students" team, including Mutesi and Mukumbya, began beating well-educated city school teams.

Mutesi and Mukumbya and some of their teammates became so good that they represented Uganda in the African Championships. By the age 15, Mutesi had won the Ugandan Women's Junior Championship three times. The next year, she became the first female player




to win the Ugandan National Junior Chess Championship open category.

National (chess) Master Elliott Neff, Chess4Life founder, became aware of Mutesi and Mukumbya while they were in the U.S. promoting their book. He and Katende became friends.

Learning that Mutesi wanted to attend a U.S. college, Neff called NU President Joseph Castleberry. The opportunity struck a chord and a full tuition scholarship was offered. Later, when Mukumbya joined Mutesi for a tour, Castleberry offered him a scholarship as well.

That fall, Neff accepted an offer to coach NU's chess team, including Mutesi and Mukumbya. Neff focused on preparing his team for the December Pan-Am Intercollegiate Chess Championships, the foremost intercollegiate team chess championship in the U.S.

The result? The rookie team claimed the college championship!

The story continues: Castleberry has agreed to offer outstanding chess players from Katende's academy, tuition scholarships to attend Northwest. 



## REALLY LONG-DISTANCE EDUCATION

BY KEN WALKER

After preaching every Sunday, during the week Pastor Jimmy Okitkun hunts seals and other wild game to help put food on the table. The only way into and out of his southwestern Alaskan village is by air; a plane ride to distant Anchorage costs about \$800.

Given this remote setting, Okitkun is grateful the Alaska School of Ministry (AKSOM) helped him obtain ministerial credentials in 2011. He started his pastorate as a lay minister at Kotlik Assembly of God about five years earlier.

“In our area, it’s building leaders and making it easier for people to get their credentials,” says Okitkun, 56. “The school helps by bringing materials and teaching in, and giving us a bigger vision of who God is.”

An unusual combination of individual study, periodic classes, and long-distance learning, AKSOM classes are aimed at educating Alaskans for ministry in towns and villages around America’s Last Frontier.

When poor online access or travel

barriers make it nearly impossible for students to watch or attend classes, Director Wade E. Cogan flies to remote areas periodically to teach them in person. A U.S. missionary, Cogan, 68, says Okitkun is a prime example of those AKSOM is designed to reach.

“Jimmy would not have been able to leave the village and come study theology,” Cogan says. “He learned lessons in those classes and put the lessons into practice on Sunday.”

AKSOM holds classes the first Saturday of each month at a facility in Eagle River, about 15 miles northeast of Anchorage. All sessions are taught by credentialed AG ministers. Pupils follow one of three tracks: certification, licensing, or ordination. Nearly 70 are enrolled this year, but 89 percent of those applying for credentials have taken AKSOM classes.

“There’s great personal satisfaction from seeing men and women pastoring in villages who wouldn’t be there if we didn’t have this program,” Cogan says. PE

steady and help him get there.

Speaking the words God had given her from the pew, Mary then stood before Robbie, and began praying and speaking against the disease. Touching the side of his face, Mary concluded her prayer with, “In the name of Jesus, be whole.” As her prayer subsided, Robbie got up from his chair — he could feel strength returning to his body!

He began praying with others who had followed Mary up to the altar.

The next morning, Robbie only had one remaining symptom, which disappeared by day three. He had immediately stopped taking one of his medications, which should have caused his Parkinson’s symptoms to go out

of control — nothing. With his doctor’s permission, he then weaned off all other medications. Still no symptoms!

After being off all his medications for nearly three months, Robbie visited his doctor for a thorough neurological exam on Jan. 23 — it came out normal. The doctor was baffled. What had Robbie done differently?

His answer? Prayer.

“Just prayer?” the doctor asked, mystified.

“Yes sir,” Robbie responded. “Just prayer.” And the obedience and faith of a 71-year-old Texas woman who was given a dream by God!

See Robbie’s video testimony at [s2.ag.org/rwmiracle](http://s2.ag.org/rwmiracle). PE

## OF THE NATIONS, FOR THE NATIONS

BY KRISTAL ORTIZ

On a shady, secluded street in Springfield, Missouri, sits Emanuel Assembly of God — sometimes called the “Islander Church.”

Launched in 2014, the congregation averages 75 worshippers, and boasts faces from multiple nations. Pastor Steve Anoa’i says, “Our desire is to be an extension of God’s hand to the Springfield area and beyond.”

Since its inception, Emanuel has been missional. They host community outreaches and cook meals for neighbors. Its unique Island Rhythm ministry uses traditional island dancing to proclaim, “not our (Samoan) culture, but Jesus’ culture.”

Pastor Steve and his wife, Lupe, explain, “We are dedicated to reaching

our community with who we are. Historically, our culture did not have much of a written language, so the oral tradition became vital for its preservation.”

The Anoa’is believe missions starts where the church is located, and that missions should be part of every ministry the church does.

Pastor Steve says for small churches seeking to become involved in missions, there are four keys — total dependence on the Holy Spirit, the need for everyone to buy in to the vision and urgency of missions, plans must be made so that a project is not begun and then left unfinished, and once the planning stage is done, engage. PE