



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY DARRIN J. RODGERS

Anna Ziese (1895-1969), the legendary Assemblies of God missionary, lost her life during the height of the Cultural Revolution in China.

When Ziese arrived in China, the nation was in the midst of social turmoil. In 1920, two warring factions, the Communists and the Nationalists, were fighting for control of the nation. The ongoing war left the countryside in shambles.

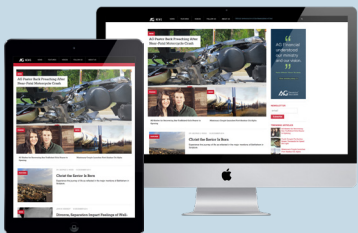
Ziese worked to alleviate the suffering caused by war and famine. She wrote numerous letters, published in the *Pentecostal Evangel*, describing the horrors of daily life endured by many Chinese. She sought funds to provide food for the hungry, and she ventured

into the war camps to minister to the prisoners. In an article published in the Jan. 12, 1935, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel*, she reported that 86 prisoners followed Christ in water baptism.

When the Communists shelled and took the city of Taiyuan in 1949, she stayed and did not flee with the other Westerners. Ziese was the only American Assemblies of God missionary who stayed in mainland China after the Communists gained control.

Read the report by Anna Ziese, "Eighty-Six Prisoners Baptized," on page 10 of the Jan. 12, 1935, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/jan121935.

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AG NEWS

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



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SAGU IMPACTING ETERNITY

BY DEANN ALFORD

He didn't grow up aiming to be an educator or career administrator, let alone the longest-serving president in Southwestern Assemblies of God University (SAGU) history. Kermit Bridges had trained for the pastorate. He graduated from Southwestern ready to lead a local church.

But during his undergraduate years at the 92-year-old Waxahachie, Texas, institution — that at the time focused on offering bachelor's degrees in disciplines leading primarily to ministry preparation — various faculty members had influenced him. That prompted him to obtain a graduate degree in case the Lord called him to teach someday.

"I had this love for Southwestern and appreciation for the classroom experience," Bridges says. "But I really didn't see myself in higher education administration."

The 1990-91 academic year proved to be difficult for Southwestern. Enrollment dropped. Financial indebtedness grew. President Delmer Guynes embraced an initiative proposed by Kermit's

mother, Joyce, about launching a prayer campaign aimed at turning around the struggling school.

Joyce Bridges called on pastors to send prayer teams to spend a day on campus interceding for the school. For nearly a decade, hardly a week passed without a church prayer team on campus calling on God to equip the next generation for service and to provide financially for Southwestern.

The school turned a corner. In 1994, Bridges became vice president of university advancement. By 2000, when Guynes retired and Bridges accepted the call to lead SAGU, enrollment had nearly tripled to 1,782 from 596 in 1991. Enrollment now has surpassed 2,100. SAGU partners with 45 Schools of Ministry. Most recently, American Indian College joined the SAGU educational network.

The percentage of SAGU students pursuing vocational ministry has remained at around 45 percent of the student body for 30 years. SAGU leads AG institutions in producing AG

GO EAST, YOUNG MAN

BY DEANN ALFORD

Nathan L. Kollar, 36, and his wife, Jessica, moved nine years ago from Pennsylvania to Los Angeles, where they planted Dwell Church, which drew people working in the multifaceted entertainment industry. Then the Lord gave a surprising directive: Move to Nashville, country music's creative hub.

"It's important that we don't just complain about where culture is headed, but that we go in as missionaries to where that culture is actually created, and plant churches there," Nathan Kollar says.

The Kollars' initial call to Music City began with laying the foundation for Risen Church as a parent-affiliated church campus of First Assembly of North Little Rock, Arkansas, through the Church Multiplication Network. The cities are five hours apart across state lines. Soon after the Kollars arrived in December 2017, Risen Church grew to 45 young people who met in the Kollars' Nashville home on Sunday

nights.

Then Tennessee Ministry Network Superintendent Terry Bailey approached Kollar with an idea from traveling evangelist Ralph Duncan. About 20 years ago, Duncan planted GraceLand Church in the rapidly growing Nashville south suburb of Franklin. GraceLand had a building and a mostly elderly congregation about the same size as Risen. Miraculously, that building sat on 135 wooded acres. What if the congregations merged?

GraceLand Church merged with Risen Church. The official launch of GraceLand Church Franklin is Sunday.

"The church is now very diverse generationally and stylistically," Kollar says. "We have retired seniors and young hipsters worshipping next to each other every week," some in suits and ties, while others don jeans and T-shirts. "We have some that work on farms and others that work in downtown Nashville."

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."



INVESTING IN A “WRONG” KID

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Kevin Ward was a kid from the “wrong side of the tracks” living in a trailer with his mom and stepfather in Pittsburg, Texas. His parents were hardworking, but they lived a hard life.

But one day in 1974, the new 24-year-old pastor of the small AG church in town invited Kevin to church.

“Our church couldn’t afford to buy a bus, so I went around in my car, asking kids if they wanted to come to church and getting their parents’ permission to come,” explains David Porter, now 69 and a missionary with his wife, Phyllis, at Network211.

“I remember Pastor David would come and pick me [and eventually his stepsister] up every week for church in his big green Plymouth Fury,” Ward recalls. Later, Ward’s mom also became a faithful attender.

The church helped Ward attend church camp every summer. One summer, God called him into the ministry — a call that he never forgot.

In 1980, the Porters left to serve as missionaries to Luxembourg. By that time, the church had grown from 40 to more than 90 congregants. Kevin and his mom remained faithful to the church.

“God had His hand on Kevin’s

life,” Porter says. “It seemed He had prepared a way for him.”

After graduating from Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, Texas, Ward became a Texas youth pastor — first at an AG church in Abilene and then in Grand Prairie.

In 1992, this “from-the-wrong-side-of-the-tracks kid” was elected the North Texas district youth director (DYD). Ward was a strong proponent for Speed the Light (STL), a program that meets missionaries’ transportation and communication needs.

Ward grew district giving to STL from \$275,000 annually to \$950,000. The Porters directly benefited from Ward’s efforts, receiving communication resources and two STL vehicles through STL. In the mid-90s, the Wards traveled to Luxembourg to visit the Porters.

“It was like we had come full circle,” Kevin Ward says.

Through Porter’s investment, the entire culture of Ward’s family and his future were transformed, which, years later, impacted the Porters’ ministry.

Ward shares, “Wherever we serve, we include bus ministry, because you never know who you are picking up.”

ATHLETICS OPEN MINISTRY DOORS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

The athletic careers of John D. Williamson and his wife, Sharon, both came to a crashing halt on the same weekend. In a tackle, John suffered a fourth football concussion when a vertebra slipped in his neck. Sharon fractured her shinbone in a track meet.

In 2006, John became the Fellowship’s first U.S. missionary sports chaplain. The Williamsons, now based in Corinth, Texas, equip local churches with the use of Global University materials to use sports as a bridge to the community to win souls to Christ. They also provide training to local churches about how to implement a chaplaincy representative from the local congregation onto a local junior high, high school, or college campus.

“Every church has the opportunity to send a chaplain representative into their community through sports,” says the amiable Williamson, 49. “That gives an opportunity to build relationships and impact their city.”

As chaplains, the Williamsons have access to public educational institutions that ministers typically don’t. They in essence become clergy to unchurched coaches and athletes. Williamson has conducted funerals, weddings, hospital visitations, and grief counseling.

“In rural America, high school sports is the most important thing in lots of towns,” John says. “If a church can build a bridge and be relational, it opens doors to be more visible.”

DEVELOPING GIFTS KEY TO SUCCESS

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Experienced church planters Tory and Elizabeth Farina felt God leading them to pioneer a church in Woodbury, a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota. Utilizing the skills, tips, and trends they learned over the years of training and coaching church planters, they launched Liberty Church in 2015.

But then reality and discouragement hit as only a handful of people attended.

“We decided we would focus on loving whomever God sent us and empowering them to go after the one,” Elizabeth says.

Over the past three years, the Farinas have started to see the results of prayer and a steady faithfulness to establish a lasting church community. Intentional mentoring and community events, one-on-one relational invitation, and community discipleship opportunities are helping the church begin to gain traction.

“After three years we are now a growing small church on mission, developing future leaders, and giving 10 percent annually to missions,” Tory says. “What was once on life support is a great church with lasting potential.”

By intentionally investing in whomever God brought to their church and helping to develop their giftings and talents, the Farinas have witnessed a multigenerational “buy-in” as young people and adults serve side-by-side.

The Farinas can see God’s hand in building the church — and the future looks to hold even greater potential.



HOLLY SHORT IS BATTALION TESTED

BY GINGER KOLBABA

From the time Lt. Holly C. Short was 3 years old, she wanted to be a sailor. At least to wear the sailor uniform. Three decades later, God fulfilled that tender-age desire as Short donned a sailor's uniform for work as a U. S. Navy chaplain.

Short deployed twice with Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 133, traveling extensively throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia. She forged relationships as troops saw her care and concern. Three years later, in 2016, she deployed again overseas after transferring to Combat Logistics Battalion 15 with the Marines.

Yet another reassignment came in November 2018, this time to serve as First Battalion chaplain to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. She is the only female among nine chaplains, and she is the only AG chaplain. Short preaches, leads multiple worship services, and offers spiritual insight and

guidance to all the military ranks.

Short, 37, believes being single has helped in her role, as it allows her more freedom to get involved with those she's serving. But she admits it has challenges. Each time she is reassigned, she has to be more intentional about seeking out community.

"I also have to be careful that I pay attention to self-care," says the Fleet Marine Force qualified officer. "Otherwise, I could end up staying all night long in my office focusing on work."

Despite the hectic and often unglamorous military lifestyle, however, Short is content.

"It's about the people," she says, her voice filled with excitement. "There are sacred moments with Marines or sailors who are completely different from me. It's the coolest thing to get to care for these people and be part of seeing God show up in their lives."

credentialed ministers.

Under Bridges, Southwestern has nearly doubled the number of academic programs, including adding a Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Creative Communication and Master of Business Administration.

"Every believer is a minister, no matter where they get their paycheck," Bridges says. "They are called to influence a lost world through their unique career, whether in a classroom, corporate business setting, in church, or a parachurch ministry involved in serving the needs of people and touching the world for the cause of Christ."

Between Bridges' tenure in development and his nearly 19 years as president, more than half of the

university's structures have been constructed, including two dorms, the Sheaffer Center, Garrison Wellness Center, and most recently the Hagee Communication Center, which opened in 2013.

One way Bridges connects with SAGU students is through "Coffee with the President." He often asks why they chose Southwestern. Their responses reveal how God is moving in individual lives.

"Some students show up never having set foot on the campus," he says. Others focused on SAGU early and never deviated. In the informal coffee chats, "I love hearing what they want to do with their lives. It's a great reminder of what I'm here for in the first place."

PASTOR PREPARES YOUNGER LEADERS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Pastor Rock Mays has seen many changes at Trinity Temple in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, since he arrived nearly a quarter of a century ago in his first pastorate. While the city of 10,650 hasn't changed much, the church has grown from 30 to 200 during Mays' tenure.

Initially, most everyone attending was middle-aged. Now, Mays believes, adherents come specifically for the children's program. He has learned to listen to the young leaders at the church, who convinced him, among other things, to start classes for parents on how to raise kids.

"This generation behind me will be the ones continuing the church," says Mays, whose wife, Clair, is a high school computer programming teacher. "I want

them to have input in planning for the future."

Figuring out a vision is a primary reason the 52-year-old Mays, an admitted fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants guy, decided the church needed to go through the Acts 2 Journey process in 2018.

Mark Overturf, who is a deacon at Trinity Temple and the volunteer worship leader, has been attending ever since Mays arrived. Overturf, 47, says the fact that youth pastor Nate Morse has been on staff for a decade as well as the recent hiring of Jessica Young as children's pastor, signal the importance that Trinity Temple places on the next generation.