



THIS WEEK IN AG HISTORY

BY RUTHIE EDGERLY OBERG

Assemblies of God missionary Victor Plymire was born in 1881 in Loganville, Pennsylvania. As a young man, he felt led to preach the gospel. After pastoring for three years, God led him into adventures he could never have imagined.

On Feb. 4, 1908, Plymire left the United States as a missionary to northwest China. He married missionary Grace Harkness in 1919 and, on a return visit to the United States, they heard the Pentecostal message and received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. They affiliated with the AG in 1920.

Adding a son, John, they returned to China in 1922. Grace and John, now 5 years old, became ill with smallpox. In January 1927, they died. Victor buried

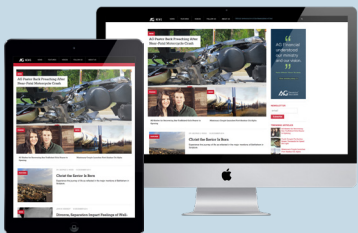
his wife and son on a mountainside in Tangar, China.

More than a year later, Victor met other missionaries, among them was Ruth Weidman. They married in August 1928. Together the couple served in China for 21 more years.

In 1949, the Plymires, along with their children, David and Mary Ann, left China due to the Communist revolution. They spent the remainder of their lives praying for their beloved churches behind the Bamboo Curtain.

Read Victor Plymire's report on a Tibetan wedding outreach on page 10 of the Jan. 19, 1935, issue of the *Pentecostal Evangel* online at s2.ag.org/jan191935.

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AG[®] NEWS

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"GOD, THAT'S A BAD IDEA"

BY DAN VAN VEEN

Pastor Angelo Austria has seen God work in undeniably miraculous ways many times in and through his life and in his church, New Life Christian Center, in Reno, Nevada. But when God told him to "go homeless" last July, he had to let God know — that was a bad idea . . . really bad.

Born in the Philippines and growing up in Reno, Austria, now 45, developed a passion to serve Christ and share the gospel. He began ministry in Reno in 2000, focusing on the middle class.

In 2011, after nearly going bankrupt and the church going from healthy to struggling, God spoke to Austria.

"God told me, 'Get up. I didn't call you to stay down there,'" Austria says. He was ready to listen. When God told him to move the church to the inner city, he obeyed. God then enabled the church to buy a \$795,000 property for only \$175,000. The church began to revive, recover, and grow.

Austria took note that in Reno,

homelessness was out of control. He prayed about what he could do and God dropped the bombshell.

"Why don't you be one?" was God's response. It wasn't what Austria wanted to hear — *it was definitely a bad idea . . . , a bad, bad, bad idea.*

On Sunday, July 29, Angelo's wife of 21 years, Analiza, dropped him off in downtown Reno with a backpack to live on the streets for a week. *How hard could it really be?*

By Tuesday, Austria had his answer. He was overwhelmed by the violence, anger, hopelessness, drugs, mental illness, summer heat, and smoke from the relatively nearby forest fires — he couldn't take it anymore. He called home for his wife to pick him up.

Analiza's response was Angelo didn't have a home until Sunday. He had made a commitment; he needed to keep it.

"If you heard from God and you know that you know this is something God wants you to do," Analiza says, "then

THE RING OF PONTIUS PILATE?

BY JEREMY STEIN

One of the most interesting archaeological discoveries to close out 2018, surprisingly enough, was not unearthed in 2018, but 50 years ago at the site of Herodium, one of the palace fortresses of Herod the Great.

The first-century copper alloy ring was unearthed in a 1968-1969 dig, but sat untouched until November 2018. Then, using new technology, it was discovered the ring bore the inscription "of Pilate."

Immediately following the discovery of the ring two schools of belief formed. The first school believes the ring could be evidence (and therefore belonged to) Pontius Pilate of the gospels who served as the Roman authority in Judea from A.D. 26-37. Others, who argue against this possible conclusion, toss the name to simple coincidence.

A Nov. 30 *New York Times* article argues "it is unlikely that the ring belonged to Pilate, in part, such simple rings usually belonged to soldiers and lesser officials, not to someone

as wealthy and powerful as Pilate." However, a closer look at the Greek reveals that due to a translation error, Pilate was referred to as procurator (governor) rather than what he should have been identified as: a prefect. This was confirmed with the discovery of the Pilate Stone in 1961, which confirmed the title of Pilate as "prefect."

A procurator and a prefect, although serving similar roles, were not interchangeable titles. Procurators were civil officials who were selected by the empire to govern essentially as a politician. A prefect, on the other hand, was a short-lived position, serving as a chief military officer and overseer of a province in the Roman Empire. This makes a career soldier the perfect fit for the role.

When examining the historical realities of the ring, it becomes entirely possible (and even arguably likely) that the ring itself bears a connection to the Pilate of the gospels.

To read the full version of this article online, see s2.ag.org/ring.

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."



LIGHTING THE ARCTIC DARKNESS

BY PETER K. JOHNSON

Despite 65 sunless days from mid-November through the end of January, not to mention frostbiting subzero temperatures, the gospel's light warms Utqiagvik, Alaska, home to the northernmost AG church in the U.S.

Utqiagvik, formerly known as Barrow, sits on the frozen tundra at the edge of the Alaska North Slope on the Arctic Ocean. The average high temperature in February is 8 degrees below zero, with the average low dipping to 20 below. The Iñupiat, an Inuit ethnic group, have settled there for many centuries. They account for about 70 percent of the remote town's 4,300 residents.

Gene O. Markle Jr., lead pastor of Iñupiat Assembly of God (IAG), is a native Alaskan, having served AG churches in the 49th state for 27 years. IAG has 65 congregants.

The close-knit community shares both happy and sad events. Families gather in churches on Thanksgiving

and Christmas for a traditional meal. Prayer and gratitude to God, hugs, and laughter open the feast. Each family receives a share of muktuk, a delicacy of frozen whale skin and blubber, and whale meat. The elders receive white fish. Partnering with whaling crews, IAG served 175 people on Thanksgiving.

IAG stresses youth ministries led by Brendan Hollis, associate pastor.

"Middle and high school students are finding Christ as Savior and having a huge impact on the community," Hollis says. "They are excited for the things of God and hanging out during the school lunch hour talking about Jesus to their friends."

In the past 18 months, a sovereign move of God has impacted students contemplating suicide or self-harm due to severe bullying. Many have found emotional healing and peace in Christ during summer camp and Wednesday evening youth services.

NEW VISION INSPIRES CHURCH

BY AGTRUST

Pastors Diego and Claudia Castaño planted Revive Church on the eastern side of Pueblo, Colorado, in 2014 after serving as youth pastors for 14 years at a Las Vegas church. Claudia is the children's ministry pastor at Revive Church. Diego is a graduate of the Latin American Theological Seminary in La Puente, California.

Ministering to and discipling people who have seen churches with different ministry philosophies come and go through the years is difficult, Diego Castaño says. Most of the people in the community have lived there far longer than Revive Church has existed.

Trusting God for His leading, the Castanös presented the Revive Church congregation with some direction and goals, but they found that inspiring them to move forward and work toward those goals was difficult.

"The Acts 2 Journey helped us create a strong and unified vision," Castaño says. "We've created a simple process of intentional discipleship that is easily communicated to the congregation and visitors. The Acts 2 Journey . . . was an absolute game changer for Revive Church."

Castaño wants everyone to feel that gathering together at church is their most memorable time of the week as they unite in worship and experience the life-changing power of the gospel.

PLANTING IN THE ARKANSAS DELTA

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Five years ago, Timothy A. Parke became the first pastor of New Life Assembly of God, after a group of 43 adults organized the Monticello, Arkansas, church.

The congregation more than tripled its first three years.

In 2018, engineer Chris W. Cook, who oversaw men's ministry and taught Sunday School at New Life, agreed to become pastor at a New Life campus in Dermott, 25 miles east of Monticello.

Today, 275 people attend New Life Monticello on an average Sunday while another 65 show up in Dermott. Monticello has a branch campus of the University of Arkansas and a fair number of young adults attend New Life there.

Parke says social media and periodic door-to-door campaigns have led to more attendees at New Life. So has involvement in the community.

The first Wednesday of every month, New Life conducts a special outreach activity.

In December, that involved singing carols at a local nursing home; other times it has been buying gifts for patients at a children's hospital, delivering paper goods to senior citizens, distributing cold water on a hot day in a store parking lot, buying pizza for college students, or surprising customers at a local gas station by paying for their fuel.



NO SMALL ACHIEVEMENTS

BY JOHN W. KENNEDY

Delana Ingram Small fulfilled her dream of becoming a U.S. Army chaplain in style. At age 26, she became the first female chaplain in the nation to report to an Army combat arms unit — just as the military lifted its ban on women in selected combat roles. Small became a member of the until-then all-male field artillery battalion within the 101st Airborne Division, known as the “Screaming Eagles.”

Small spent most of 2013 in Afghanistan. As an artillery chaplain, she went to visit soldiers in scattered areas of operations at particular gun lines. She also served as the officer in charge of chapels at two far-flung locations, traveling by helicopter each week to coordinate church services. Then came multiple short trips with special operations throughout the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

Since July 2018, Small, 33, has been a chaplain at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. Small, a regimental captain, now is one of five chaplains directly supports 4,400 West

Point cadets, faculty, staff, and their families. She also conducts chapel services, plus weddings and funerals (for alumni). Although one-quarter of the cadets are women, Small is the only female chaplain. She finds many females confide in her.

Small notes that multiple denominations don’t authorize women in such ministry roles, and her primary opposition over the years has been from an occasional male chaplain who doesn’t believe women are theologically qualified to serve in the role.

“I don’t perceive myself as a *female* chaplain,” Small says. “I want to be viewed as a *chaplain*. Gender doesn’t matter. Women aren’t in a special category.”

Small expects to make the most of her three-year assignment at West Point.

“Here I have the opportunity to influence future military leaders,” Small says. “I have opportunity to help young people at a vital time in their lives and help them get on track with God, faith, relationships, and healthy boundaries.”

you need to fulfill that calling.” She explains that God had given her a peace that this was something Angelo needed to do.

Analiza’s firm stance was providential. With a new resolve to complete the week, Angelo began to look for ways to experience what homeless people experience. He soon realized how easy it was to pass a negative judgment on someone when you didn’t know his or her story and take the attitude of “Get a haircut . . . get a job!”

That Sunday, Angelo, who is also the president of the Filipino-American Fellowship, made his way to his church and preached two powerful services in the clothes he had been wearing all week.

Through the homeless experience

CHURCH BLESSES MISSIONARY KIDS

BY IAN RICHARDSON

City Center Church in Lenexa, Kansas, looks upon missionary kids as heroes. And the church goes over the top to make several of them feel that way.

For the past decade, the church has held an annual banquet for missionary kids attending Evangel University in Springfield, Missouri. The event features an upscale dinner, games, fellowship with the other MKs, and large gifts for each student totaling about \$400 apiece.

“They didn’t ask to spend their lives where they did and didn’t have a say in the sacrifice,” says lead pastor Matt Purkey. “For that, we take one night a year to say thank you.”

In 2009, the church started the

— aka “God’s bad idea” — Angelo has led his church in launching a new ministry called Up Reach Resource Center, designed to assist those who are homeless with a hand up.

Currently the center is helping the homeless as full teams of counselors, trainers, and other volunteers who can assist larger numbers of those struggling with homelessness and poverty are simultaneously developed. The focus is to move people from the relief stage to the rehabilitation stage and beyond.

“We are considered by many as a small church,” Angelo says, “but when you step out in faith, trust God — even with a few — and God begins to do amazing miracles, then only God gets the glory.”

dinner to bring the MKs together and to show their appreciation around the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. City Center Church fully finances the banquet through special offerings and a line in its annual budget.

This year’s event welcomed 22 MKs. Each received cash and gift cards to restaurants, as well as Kindle Fires. Four students won large prizes: \$1,000 and \$500 scholarships, an Apple laptop, and an iPad.

For the past two years, the church has put together a video compilation of each students’ parents saying “Merry Christmas,” to show at the end of the dinner.